

Dadansoddi ar gyfer Polisi



Analysis for Policy

Ymchwil gymdeithasol
Social research

Number: 02/2011



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

www.cymru.gov.uk

Review of the Welsh Local Government Association's Equalities Unit January 2011

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Assembly Government

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Welsh Assembly Government Social Research, 2011

ISBN 978 0 7504 5929 7

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1.0 Executive summary

This report outlines the findings of a review of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Equalities Unit undertaken between August and December 2009 on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The overall aim of the evaluation was to review the role and activities of the Equalities Unit and specifically explore the nature and extent of the support provided to local authorities, assess its value from local authorities' perspective, determine whether local authorities desired any changes in the role and purpose of the Unit and assess how far the support given sustains Assembly Government policy aims on equalities in local government.

The findings are based on a review of background and policy related documentation, a review of a sample of resources produced by the Equalities Unit, responses to a web based survey, consultations across eight local government authorities and interviews with key stakeholders.

The review found that the support and information made available by the Equalities Unit is highly valued amongst its target audience. The calibre and professionalism of the team is considered a key strength of the Unit. Furthermore it was felt that a thorough understanding of local government enabled the Unit to provide a tailored and supportive service. The authors of the report believe that the focus of Equalities Unit's work, which has mostly been around helping local government fulfil its legislative duties, has been well aligned to meet the priorities of local authorities.

The review found that in the main the products and services made available by the Equalities Unit are of high quality and are considered to be very useful to authorities with many examples cited where resources were making a difference to their work. However, authorities

do have some concerns, particularly related to the appropriateness and practicality of the Equalities Improvement Framework (EIF).

The fieldwork revealed that the Equalities Unit has not been able to meet the needs of associate members to the same degree as local authorities. It also highlighted some issues about the business planning process adopted by the Equalities Unit and drew attention to the lack of strategic Welsh Assembly Government equalities input into its work as well as raising some questions about the extent to which the Unit has been able to fulfil its objective of providing advice and support to the Welsh Assembly Government.

More generally, the fieldwork found that there still remains a high degree of inconsistency between the ways in which different local authorities approach equalities issues suggesting that the Unit may not have been as effective as was hoped in helping to “level up” the differences across authorities. In this context, the findings also suggest that the Unit has been heavily focused on operational level intervention and has found it difficult to engage at a more strategic level.

There was widespread support for retaining the work of the Equalities Unit amongst those consulted and we conclude that there is strong justification for the Welsh Assembly Government to continue to provide financial support for supporting local government on equalities issues. The authors of the report also conclude that funding should be maintained within the Local Government Policy Division but that the lack of strategic equality policy input in the management of the Unit from the Welsh Assembly Government needs to address in moving forward.

There are seven recommendations in the report:

- To continue funding the work of the Equalities Unit for at least another three years and if appropriate that this funding be ring fenced within any single fund made available to the WLGA;
- To maintain the Equalities Unit funding within the Local Government Policy Division and establish a Steering Group with strategic level input from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division to help direct and monitor the work of the Equalities Unit;
- To review and improve the business planning processes of the Equalities Unit making future work objectives SMARTer and more outcomes oriented (as opposed to process oriented) and similarly that action planning targets become more outcome based;
- That the Equalities Unit places a greater focus upon strategic level intervention and 'non-converted' authorities;
- That the Equalities Unit considers a comprehensive revision of the Equalities Improvement Framework and its related guidance after the new Equalities Duties are adopted;
- That the Equalities Unit revisits and updates the terms of reference for its Networks, and reconvenes Rhwydiaith at the earliest opportunity;
- That the Equalities Unit seeks to reflect the approach of Single Equality Schemes in terms of adopting a less strand specific approach and placing a greater focus on equality and human rights outcomes.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Background

Old Bell 3 Ltd. was commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in August 2009 to undertake a review of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Equalities Unit.

The Welsh Assembly Government, originally through its Local Government Modernisation Division and now through its Local Government Policy Division, has provided financial support to the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) since 2002 in order to part-fund an Equalities Unit intended to provide tailored support to local authorities in Wales aimed at “improving their equalities practices” and “supporting the development of best equalities practices within local government”¹ as part of the broader effort to improve the responsiveness of local authorities in terms of their service delivery.

The Unit provides a range of support to local government, including providing equalities-related training and learning opportunities for local authority members and officers, contributing to the development of local government policy and practice by ensuring equalities issues are taken into account, providing a range of information materials and tools, giving tailored support to individual local authorities and facilitating a range of Networks including an Equalities Network, an Elected Members Equality Champions Networks and the Rhwydiath Network which focuses on implementation of Welsh language policies.

2.2 Aim of the Review

The aim of the evaluation was to review the role and activities of the Equalities Unit and specifically:

¹ Report of the Equalities Unit to the WLGA Coordinating Committee, 2006

- “To review the nature and extent of the support given to local authorities by the Equalities Unit.
- To assess how far the support given sustains Assembly Government policy aims on equalities in local government.
- To assess how far the work of the Unit is valued by local authorities.
- To determine whether local authorities desire any changes in the role and purpose of the unit”.

The Research Specification also highlighted the need for the review:

- “to assess whether continued financial support by the Assembly Government is justified; and if so
- to identify the most appropriate policy area within the Assembly Government (e.g. the Equality and Human Rights Division², or the Local Government Policy Division), to fund and effectively monitor the unit.”

2.3 Method

This report is based on a work programme undertaken between September and December 2009 which involved:

- Undertaking a review of key background and policy related documentation;
- Reviewing a sample of the resources produced by the Equalities Unit;
- Developing and administering a bilingual web-based survey (Annex 2) as well as a sub-survey which were completed by 93 local authority representatives in total;
- Undertaking consultations with 15 representatives across eight Local Authorities;

² Now the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division

- Undertaking consultations with a further 16 stakeholders (including WAG and WLGA representatives as presented in Annex 1)

2.4 Structure of this Report

In the remainder of this report, we firstly discuss the key policy and legislative drivers to contextualise the work of the Equalities Unit (**Section 3**), before turning to consider the background to the Equalities Unit (**Section 4**) and to outline our findings (**Section 5**): this Section is structured specifically to meet the requirements set out in the evaluation brief. Finally we present our conclusions (**Section 6**) and recommendations (**Section 7**).

3.0 Policy Context

3.1 Introduction

In this Section, we explain the context in which the review has taken place. We first examine the policy framework in respect of local government (Section 3.2) before exploring the equalities drivers that have been relevant to the work of the Equalities Unit (Section 3.3).

3.2 Review of Policy Drivers

The advent of devolution and the creation of the National Assembly for Wales have resulted in considerable development within the local government service improvement agenda. A review of a number of Welsh Assembly Government flagship policies and strategic publications over the last five years (see below) shows that equalities have been at the heart of this agenda. Local government and the WLGA have had to respond to this evolving agenda and as a result the importance attached to equalities has been formalised within local government provision.

Prior to the publication of these flagship policies, the WLGA commissioned a report in 2004 to explore the different approaches to managing equality in Welsh local government. This report, produced by the National Centre for Public Policy at the University of Wales Swansea³ noted in its opening that equality is a “complex, sensitive and contested notion that has implications throughout the work of local authorities. It demands an informed approach to its management.”

The report concluded that equality is an issue which can only be addressed through the joint working of many agencies and individuals. It also noted that managing equality required a range of tensions to be

³ Sullivan M, Williams P & Wooding N, 2004, “Managing equality in Welsh Local Government”, National Centre of Public Policy, Swansea

addressed: these included balancing the need for standardisation with diversity of need, and the tensions which can arise between the roles and behaviours of corporate centres and service delivery units. Since that period, local government in Wales has been presented with a raft of policy changes. Many of these draw attention to these tensions in managing equality, but finding solutions is less straightforward.

In its first public service reform policy publication published during its second term in 2004 “Making the Connections”⁴ the Welsh Assembly Government paved the way for a commitment to equality and social justice which local government, with support from the WLGA’s Equalities Unit, would need to address. It was viewed as both challenging and groundbreaking in that it placed citizens at the centre of services, rather than being based on an expectation that citizens would “make their way” to services should they ever require them. The policy was driven by a commitment to social justice and equality and set out the Welsh Assembly Government’s vision for a prosperous, sustainable, bilingual, healthier and better-educated Wales.

In its subsequent action plan “Delivering the connections – a 5 year action plan for delivering better services in Wales”⁵, the Welsh Assembly Government made a commitment to achieving responsive and accessible services through taking “concerted action to make mainstream public services more effective for disadvantaged groups and promote take-up.”

This was to be achieved through developing a Mainstreaming Equalities Strategy, implementing a Race Equality Scheme and working with partners to promote equality and tackle discrimination. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government sought to work closely with regulators and inspectors, building equalities into the performance management framework at a service and a corporate level. The action

⁴ Welsh Assembly Government, 2004

⁵ Welsh Assembly Government, June 2004

plan would have significant bearing upon the work of the WLGA's Equalities Unit as it recognised the advantages to be gained from promoting equality, such as through mainstreaming equality in procurement procedures, taking action to make mainstream public services more effective for disadvantaged groups and through engaging the workforce. At the same time it recognised a need to increase the capacity and competency of the public sector workforce, including senior managers, to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination.

The "Delivering the Connections" action plan included a commitment to undertake a review of local service delivery. This review "The Review of Local Service Delivery – Beyond Boundaries, citizen centred local services for Wales"⁶ was based on responses from a wide range of stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors, as well as an analysis of peoples' perceptions and experiences of public services in Wales. The Report found that public service performance in Wales was too patchy and concluded that transformation was needed, both immediately and over the longer term. However the Report also identified three barriers to achieving this transformation which were:

- Complexity, in terms of governance regimes, departments working in silos and fragmentation in delivery;
- Capacity, due to over-stretched leadership, strategic capability and expertise;
- Culture, meaning organisations were un-ambitious, not sufficiently innovative and unchallenging.

In order to overcome these barriers, the report recommended the adoption of some of the same principles suggested in "Making the Connections", including improving citizen engagement and developing effective partnerships.

⁶ Sir Jeremy Beecham, 2006

In its response to Sir Jeremy Beecham's Report, the Welsh Assembly Government set out an action plan to overcome the barriers identified and to achieve the improvements required. The action plan "Delivering beyond boundaries: transforming public services in Wales"⁷ was built around six strands, namely:

- Putting citizens first;
- Working together to deliver;
- World class workforce;
- Better value for the Welsh pound;
- Driving the change: government, resources and performance;
- Fitting it all together.

Again, this action plan had a commitment to equality underlying all sections and reinforced the need for the work of the WLGA's Equalities Unit. In its introduction, the Report states that "the transformation in quality and effectiveness needs to include all aspects of service delivery together with a commitment to tackling inequality of outcomes." It was not simply an aspiration that services, when received, should be excellent. It was an aspiration that excellent services should be delivered to everyone. The report noted that, to achieve this required a "sharp shift from a public sector ethos that is limited to particular professional or service boundaries to a public service ethos based on promoting quality and equality". It concluded that equality and social justice would remain paramount, and that it was essential that services respond to the whole community.

One year after the publication of "Delivering beyond boundaries" the Welsh Assembly Government set out its policy framework for driving

⁷ Welsh Assembly Government, 2006

forward improvement in “Making the Connections – Building better customer service, a framework for improvement”⁸.

The content of the Report reflected and complemented changes in the legislative duties of local government, including Race, Gender and Disability Equality Duties and the Welsh Language Act. It highlighted the need for local government, when responding to legal requirements, to make a connection to its customer service planning, noting that:

“When an assessment reveals that some groups of the population do not have the same opportunity, or are being discriminated against, for a particular type or aspect of customer service, then an organisation needs to change its customer service policies or practices to address this.”

In many ways, the simple fact that the Report now referred to local government having “customers” rather than “citizens” or “service users” is a mark of how far policy thinking had come since the publication of the original Making the Connection report in 2004.

The Report emphasised that the actions required were only a start and thus arguably reinforced the need for long-term support to local government in addressing equalities issues of the kind being provided by the WLGA’s Equalities Unit. It also made direct reference to the actions being aimed at the NHS and the Welsh Assembly Government, as well as local government in order to achieve better customer service and noted that many of the actions were equally applicable to other sectors – which underlines the importance of ensuring that the promotion of equalities approaches within local government being aligned to broader Welsh Assembly Government equalities policy.

⁸ Welsh Assembly Government, March 2007

The actions proposed in the policy framework were also reinforced in the Welsh Assembly Government policy statement “A Shared Responsibility”⁹ which was published during the same month. The policy statement set out both the Assembly Government’s expectations of local authorities and the support that the Assembly Government aimed to provide, specifically in the areas of ensuring public services are centred on the needs and experience of citizens, encouraging cross boundary collaboration and encouraging integration and responsiveness through cross sector collaboration. In doing so, it presented a further challenge for local government to move away from the barriers of complexity and under-ambition identified in the Beecham report. However, it also presented a challenge regarding the barrier of over-stretched leadership, strategic capability and expertise. Possibly because of this, “A Shared Responsibility” includes a commitment by the Welsh Assembly Government to improve customer service through working with the WLGA on councillor development, appraisal and equality and diversity training.

The “One Wales” joint programme of Government issued in 2007 as the basis for the current Labour – Plaid Cymru coalition¹⁰ emphasises the on-going commitment to “the sort of fair, prosperous, confident and outgoing Wales which its citizens deserve and demand”. While there is no specific mention of promoting equalities work within local government, it suggests that activity to promote equality is one of the key actions required in order to achieve this “One Wales” vision. The first Delivery Plan (2008 – 2011), includes proposals to make a success of the new Single Equality Body in Wales, to continue and extend collaboration with the Interfaith Forum, to explore and implement new ways of engaging citizens, to implement the All Wales Strategy on Gypsies and Travellers, to refine and implement the

⁹ Welsh Assembly Government, March 2007

¹⁰ “One Wales, a progressive agenda for the government of Wales. An agreement between the Labour and Plaid Cymru Groups in the National Assembly” Welsh Assembly Government, June 2007

Refugee Inclusion Strategy and to develop a strategy to reduce hate crime. These strategic proposals are reinforced by quantifiable targets in Annual Delivery Plans, such as that in the 2009-2010 plan to invest £190m in public health and health improvement to address inequalities in health.

Finally The Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) was introduced in Wales in 2002 by the Welsh Assembly Government as a new approach to stimulate and support improvement in the delivery of local services and was significantly revised in 2005 to reflect the development of the Making the Connections agenda. Equality and diversity were introduced into the Wales Programme for Improvement Guidance as a “key ingredient of effective and efficient performance on all levels of authorities’ functions, from service delivery to strategic planning and community leadership” with the requirement for Annual Equalities and Sustainability Assessments. In line with the commitment stated in “Delivering the connections” (2004) to work with inspection and regulatory bodies, the Wales Audit Office was given the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the WPI.

In its 2007 report on the WPI the Wales Audit Office welcomed the progress made in relation to equalities, specifically the new guidance developed by the WLGA. However, equality and diversity remained one of only two areas of high risk. This is perhaps an indication of the gap between the undoubted high level importance given to equality at a policy level in Wales, and the capacity of local government to achieve these policy aims.

3.3 Review of Equality Drivers

The focus of Equalities work within local government has changed significantly not only as a result of government policy but also due to other national equality drivers and legislative developments which are discussed in this section. These include the establishment of the new

Commission for Equality and Human Rights and legislative developments such as the Single Equality Act and Single Equality Bill. At the Welsh level the Welsh Assembly Government has experienced an increase in its statutory duties in regard to equalities and in response has developed a Single Equality Scheme. This move represents a shift towards a more holistic – rather than strand-specific approach – to tackling equalities issues as well as a shift in focus towards outcome related intervention rather than process based activity has also had bearing upon the work of local government.

One key research publication which recommended a stronger focus on outcomes rather than processes was the report of the Equalities Review “Fairness and Freedom: the final report of the Equalities Review”¹¹. The Westminster Government established the Equalities Review Panel in 2005 to provide an understanding of the long term and underlying causes of disadvantage that need to be addressed by public policy, to make practical recommendations on key policy priorities and finally to inform both the modernisation of equality legislation towards a Single Equality Act, and the development of the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The Review Panel was chaired by Trevor Phillips and comprised a wide range of practitioners and academics from the public, private and third sectors.

In its introduction, the Report notes that it “does not dwell heavily on the roles and responsibilities of civic society, families or individuals”, instead proposing a new approach which it claims is very practical and allows the measurement of progress towards equality. The report sets out a framework for measuring inequality that is based on ten dimensions which it derived from international human rights principles and consultation with the general public, including groups at high risk of

¹¹ Trevor Phillips (Chair), February 2007

disadvantage. The Report identifies barriers which need to be overcome, and sets out ten steps to greater equality:

- Defining equality;
- Building a consensus on equality;
- Measuring progress towards equality;
- Transparency about progress;
- Targeted action on persistent inequalities;
- A simpler legal framework;
- More accountability for delivering equality;
- Using public procurement and commissioning positively;
- Enabling and supporting organisations in all sectors;
- A more sophisticated enforcement regime.

The Report concludes that a more equal Britain would be a better Britain: more prosperous, more humane, more cohesive and fairer. It also concluded that, while advances have been made in some important areas, there remain inequalities in society, together with powerful socio-economic trends (such as within demographic patterns, employment, health, and crime and criminal justice), which are not changing and which will not change without a fresh approach and a new impetus.

The establishment of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) as a statutory independent body under the Equality Act 2006 with a significant presence in Wales has also had bearing upon the work of local government in Wales. Its current Welsh programme of work, which has adopted a much more holistic approach to equalities, “Setting a new agenda”¹² is focused on five key priorities, namely:

¹² Wales review and our plan for 2009/10 Commission for Equality and Human Rights

- “Securing better laws: secure and implement an effective legislative and regulatory framework for equality and human rights.
- Ensuring a fairer Wales for all: create a fairer Wales, with equal life chances and access to services for all.
- Building a Wales without prejudice: build a society without prejudice, promote good relations and foster a vibrant equality and human rights culture.
- Promoting awareness of rights: promote understanding and awareness of rights and duties and deliver timely and accurate advice and guidance to individuals and employers.
- Building our team: build an authoritative and responsive organization”.

In its work programme the Commission states that it has been working with public authorities to “improve equality in their workplaces and in the services they provide” and acknowledges that in its contact with public authorities it has found examples of “encouraging progress” as well as “effective practice and improved outcomes”. Of particular relevance to local government in Wales and the work of the Equalities Unit is the Commission’s ability to “promote and enforce the public sector duties” which are likely to be extended under the proposed Equality Bill. The Equality Bill proposes to introduce a new Equality Duty upon the public sector which will require local government to extend their current public duty for race, disability and gender to include other strands such as gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

In response to the establishment of the EHRC and in order to tackle inequalities identified in its own policy documents such as “One Wales” in a more holistic manner the Welsh Assembly Government launched its first Single Equality Scheme and action plans in March 2009. As with previous policies and plans, it was developed following a

comprehensive engagement and consultation process. As well as demonstrating how the Welsh Assembly Government planned to fulfil its obligations under current equality law, it also aimed to go further, applying the same broad principles to new areas of equality – age, religion and belief or non-belief, sexual orientation and transgender. The Scheme was developed during the period of the introduction of the Equality Bill by the Westminster Government¹³.

Welsh Assembly Government priorities and department action plans have been developed partly as a result of feedback gathered during the consultation process. Each department within the Welsh Assembly Government has an action plan which is reviewed at six monthly intervals. By way of example the Department for Social Justice and Local Government action plan is based on four High Level statements:

- “Promoting Social Justice by reducing the causes and effects of poverty on children in Wales;
- Support those marginalised from society by improving financial inclusion and ensuring everyone can be free from poverty;
- Promote a more cohesive community which encourages community regeneration, shared values and equal opportunities in all areas of Welsh society;
- Improve access to core services for disadvantaged groups including the victims of domestic abuse”.

All of these are what academics and policy makers sometimes refer to as “wicked”¹⁴ issues, those complex issues which require the involvement of many agencies if they are to be addressed successfully.

¹³ The Westminster Government announced the Single Equality Bill in June 2008, and the Bill is about to move into the House of Commons Report Stage.

¹⁴ First adopted by Rittel and Weber in 1973 and defined as an issue “*which cannot be resolved by single agencies acting autonomously*” (Kooiman, 2000)

This is very much reflected in the actions which support these High Level statements, where the Department of Social Justice and Local Government outlines its intention to work with a range of public and third sector organisations, as well as Local Government, in order to achieve its targets.

At the same time, other Welsh Assembly Government departments have action plans which indicate their intention to work with local government. These include the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, the Department for Economy and Transport, the Department of Environment, Sustainability and Housing, and the Department of Health and Social Services, Public Health and Health Professions. This is not surprising, as these other departments are also trying to address issues which cannot be solved by a single agency. However, it does underline the importance of the contribution of local government with the support of the WLGA's Equalities Unit in achieving the aims of the Single Equality Scheme. It also highlights the fact that local government is expected to respond to calls for action from more than one Assembly Government department throughout the period that the Scheme is implemented. Such a position is likely to be challenging for many local authorities, and it may also cause confusion.

3.4 Conclusion

There are a number of key messages and themes that emerge from this policy review which are relevant to our understanding of the work of the WLGA's Equalities Unit and of local government equalities issues more generally. Policy developments since 2004 have led a change in local government responsibilities, with equality and social justice becoming central to the work of local authorities, both strategically and operationally. There have also been changes in legislation and the duties placed upon local government, and there has been active support from the Assembly Government through the "One Wales" Action Delivery plan, its commitment to mainstreaming

equalities and its commitment to supporting councillor development, appraisal and equality and diversity training.

At the same time, local government has also had to respond to policy and strategy development which, at some level, may appear to conflict with the mainstreaming ethos and reinforce the tensions described in the Swansea University report concerning balancing the need for standardisation with diversity of need. As Assembly Government departments implement their individual Action Plans under the Single Equalities Scheme, local authorities may also find themselves having to balance and respond to calls for action from a number of Assembly Government departments at the same time. Furthermore the Wales Programme of Improvement latest annual report points to a current gap between the high degree of importance being allocated to equality at a policy level in Wales and the capacity within local government to achieve equalities goals at present.

Some of the most recent equality drivers apparent in the Equalities Review as well as in the proposed Single Equality Bill and the work of the EHRC represent a shift towards a more holistic and outcome related intervention in this field. This change has and will continue to have bearing upon the approaches expected to be adopted by local government and the support that such authorities will expect from the WLGA's Equalities Unit.

4.0 The Equalities Unit: History

4.1 Introduction

In this section we give a brief account of the Equalities Unit's background (Section 4.2) before considering in turn its funding and contracting arrangements (Section 4.3), business planning objectives (Section 4.4), and giving a brief overview of the Equalities Unit activities since 2005 (Section 4.5).

4.2 Background

The WLGA Equalities Unit was originally established in April 2002 when the then Minister for Local Government approved the funding for the creation and maintenance of a bespoke unit within the WLGA to provide ongoing equalities policy advice and practical support to the Assembly and local government on equalities issues within local government. Funding was made available for an initial period of three years to the end of 2004/05 with a total of fund of some £786k made available for this period. This included an initial set-up grant of £90k and annual budgets of £231k a year¹⁵.

Towards the end of the three year period the Welsh Assembly Government commissioned an internal review of the Equalities Unit and in its report "Review of the WLGA Equalities Unit" Doug Elliott concluded that the work of the Unit was strongly appreciated by local authorities and recommended the continuation of the financial support for a further three years. It highlighted as strengths of the advice, support and training made available by the Equalities Unit that it:

¹⁵ Review of the WLGA Equalities Unit: A performance evaluation, and future options review" Doug Elliott November 2004

- “is valued and respected by local government, the Assembly and statutory equality commissions;
- has aligned well to the legislative framework;
- has been a good mix of policy development work, proactive general advice and guidance, and specific responsive/tailored support and training to individual councils;
- is anchored into a growing portfolio of impressive national training programmes;
- has been built around good networks and partnerships with other stakeholders in Wales;
- has generally provided a good balance between different equalities strands; and
- satisfies the key conditions associated with the funding provided by the Assembly”.

It also recommended a number of improvements for the future work and direction of the Unit and these included:

- “providing clarity around the advice, support and compliance roles of the Unit and the statutory equalities commissions;
- developing a more integrated and harmonised approach to equalities policy development, advice and support for public services, within the Assembly itself;
- embedding equalities more firmly into any Assembly WPI guidance for local government, around self- assessment and member scrutiny arrangements for example, in the future;
- delivering a greater focus on equalities performance from the statutory inspectorates in Wales, and a much greater coherence around methodology, approach to evaluation, and public reporting;
- delivering effective challenge and evaluation arrangements through policy agreement review and the PMF¹⁶;

¹⁶ Performance Measurement Framework

- updating and evolving the Generic Equalities Standard to reflect the most up-to-date requirements, and ensuring evaluation of the progress towards implementing the different levels within the standard is undertaken across all councils in Wales;
- embedding equalities issues firmly into other national policy initiatives and programmes such as Excellence Wales¹⁷ and the PSMW¹⁸;
- ensuring proper alignment between local government evaluation frameworks such as the PMF to other systems being put in place across public services in Wales (such as the balanced scorecard for the NHS) in order to support shared equality outcomes;
- reconvening the all-Wales Equalities Round-Table; and
- using the improved information about equalities performance that will emerge, in order to empower more effective scrutiny at Assembly Member level, through the Equality of Opportunity Committee and Subject Committees”.

4.3 Funding and Contracting Arrangements

Since the start of the funding agreement, and even since the review in 2005, the context within which the Equalities Unit has been working has changed significantly. In particular the WLGA has undergone significant internal change and restructuring. Whereas the Equalities Unit originally formed a part of Syniad, which at that time formed a discrete performance improvement unit associated with the WLGA, the Unit is now “embedded” within a broader Equalities and Social Justice Directorate, which is separate from the Improvement and Governance and Employment Directorates.

¹⁷ A scheme developed and promoted by the Welsh Local Government Association in collaboration with the Welsh Assembly Government, Wales Audit Office and Welsh local authorities to promote learning from peers and improve collective performance; to offer local authorities in Wales the opportunity to recognise and celebrate notable practice and to promote a positive image of local government in the national and local media.

¹⁸ Public Service Management Wales

The annual funding made available to the Equalities Unit for 2009/10 has been £239,000. Since its inception in 2002 the Unit has received a total of £1.965 million in Welsh Assembly Government funding. Funding has been primarily used to fund the cost of salaries and at the time of undertaking our fieldwork four full time posts were being funded via the grant namely Head of Equalities and Social Justice, Equalities Training Officer, Equalities Policy Officer and an Administrator.

Funding has been made available via annual grant offer letters prepared by the Local Government Policy Division within the Welsh Assembly Government. The grant offer letters reviewed as part of this evaluation state that the purpose of the funding to the WLGA Equalities Unit is to “provide advice, guidance and services to all county and country borough councils in Wales, of whatever political persuasion and... irrespective of membership of the Welsh Local Government Association, and to the Welsh Assembly Government”¹⁹ in accordance with the Unit’s Work Plan for the year in consideration. Each annual Work Plan is prepared by the Equalities Unit and approved by the Local Government Policy Division prior to its inclusion in grant offer letters.

Each grant letter states that it will be a requirement for the Equalities Unit to submit an annual report evaluating the work of the Unit with the report for 2009/10 for example being due by the end of May 2010. Furthermore it is expected that the Local Government Policy Division will be kept informed of progress against the work plan objectives as well as operational and financial progress through “a series of quarterly reports and monitoring meetings”²⁰.

¹⁹ Taken from the Welsh Assembly Government’s 2009/10 Grant Approval Letter to the Welsh Local Government Association dated 3 July 2009

²⁰ Ibid

4.4 Business Planning Objectives

The Equalities Unit prepares an annual Business Plan to form the basis of its work plan for each year of funding. As part of this evaluation we have reviewed the three most recent plans covering 2007/8, 2008/9 and 2009/10.

The three Business Plans largely follow the same structure and set out key objectives followed by actions to be achieved by the end of each quarter. The earlier Business Plans also refer to the on-going work carried out by the Unit such as maintaining relationships with key partners and delivering training as and when requested. The Unit's most recent business plan for 2009/10 presents the context of the Unit's work and discusses the implications of external developments upon its work. In our view this is a welcome move – particularly in terms of identifying the challenges for the Unit.

Each annual Business Plan identifies some ten or so key objectives for the year under consideration. Some of these objectives are ongoing objectives whilst others are more specific relating to particular projects or new developments. The objectives identified all appear to fall under the grant offer terms of offering “advice, guidance and services” to both local government and the Welsh Assembly Government but, in our view many of them (particularly during 09/10) were not particularly SMART²¹ e.g. “the arrangement and facilitation of a range of Networks”.

The number of actions per quarter outlined within the Business Plans varies from three to ten, and generally a greater number and more detailed actions have been identified during the first and second quarters of the year suggesting perhaps that greater consideration has been given to activities being planned for the first six months of the

²¹ Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound.

year. The actions proposed tend to be activity based such as holding events, delivering training and issuing documents and again are not necessarily formulated in a way which is consistent with a SMART approach.

4.5 Overview of Activities

The focus of activity over the last three years has largely been upon the following areas:

- Provision of general equalities advice and support to local government organisations;
- Supporting the implementation of the Equality Improvement Framework (EIF) via general assistance and training, and providing assistance to the three EIF pilot projects;
- Provision of resources and information such as Equalities briefings, e-bulletins, website and other advice notes and good practice case studies;
- Delivery of various training courses such as “Valuing Difference, Creating Success”, “Training Equality Trainers” and “Making a Difference”;
- Facilitation of local authority networks such as the Equality Officer’s Network, Elected Member Equality Champions Network and Rhwydiaith with a view to promoting best practice;

The Equalities Unit has prepared quarterly progress reports to the Welsh Assembly Government to outline achievements against the quarterly actions identified in its Business Plan for that year. Within this evaluation we have been able to review the majority of reports prepared since 2007/8. In most, but not all, cases the reports have been presented in a consistent manner and present a detailed account of progress against each target action. There is often evidence of slippage against particular targets, particularly over summer periods, but in most of these cases a valid explanation has been provided. It is

difficult to make judgements as to whether the Unit is on course to achieve the objectives set for any particular year as the objectives that have been set are often not specific enough to measure against progress.

5.0 Findings

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Overview of the Section

In this Section, we present the findings of our review, drawing together the evidence collected from a variety of sources, including our own review of resources developed by the Equalities Unit, our web based survey, interviews with Local Authorities and stakeholders. The material is presented in three main Sections relating to the objectives set for the review: the strategic objectives of the Unit and the extent to which the provision has sustained Welsh Assembly Government policy aims on equalities in local government (Section 5.2); the nature and extent of the support given to local government and the value attached to this support (Section 5.3) and requirements for the future including the future need, role and purpose of the unit and its continued financial support (Section 5.4).

However, before turning to these findings, we provide (in Section 5.1.2) some information about the sample of local authorities which provided much of the data within this Section.

5.1.2 Profile of Authorities

93 responses were received to the web based survey – 54 individuals completed the full survey and 39 completed the sub-survey focusing on the Equalities Unit's training provision. In all this represented a response rate of 23%²².

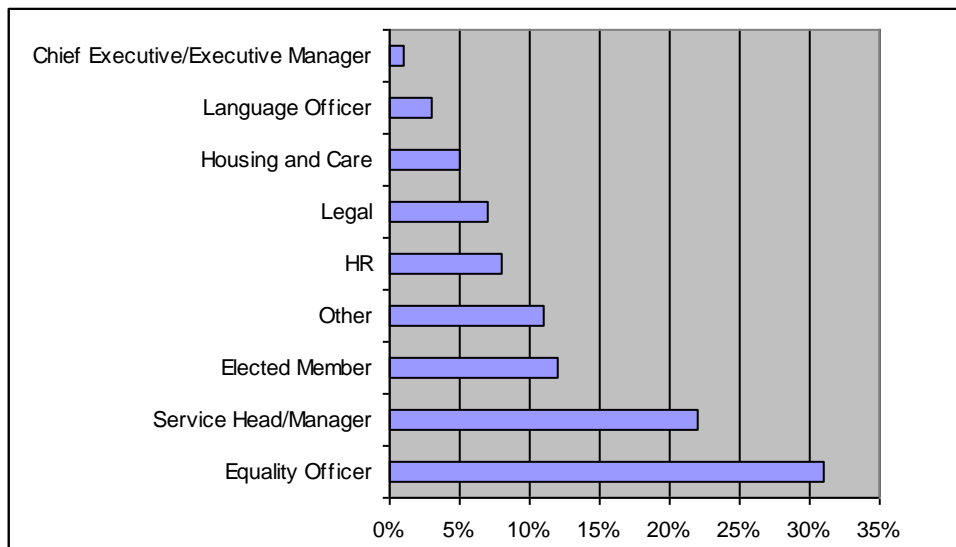
²² The survey was distributed by e-mail to some 400 live e-mail addresses made available by the WLGA and based on contacts sourced via a variety of databases including Elected Member Equality Champion network, Equality Network, Bulletin Distribution List, Training the

The overwhelming majority of respondents were based within local authorities (77 respondents or 86%) whilst most of the remaining respondents were working for police authorities (10 respondents or 11%). It was slightly disappointing that only one respondent responded on behalf of the fire and rescue services and no response was received from the National Parks.

A follow up call was made to some of the non-respondents based with National Parks and the Fire and Rescue Services. These discussions revealed that there was a general awareness about the work of the Equalities Unit and that these authorities had received information from the Unit in the past. However their reluctance to participate in the survey stemmed from a feeling that the work of the Unit was less relevant to their organisations as they did not necessarily have to fulfil the same duties as local authorities.

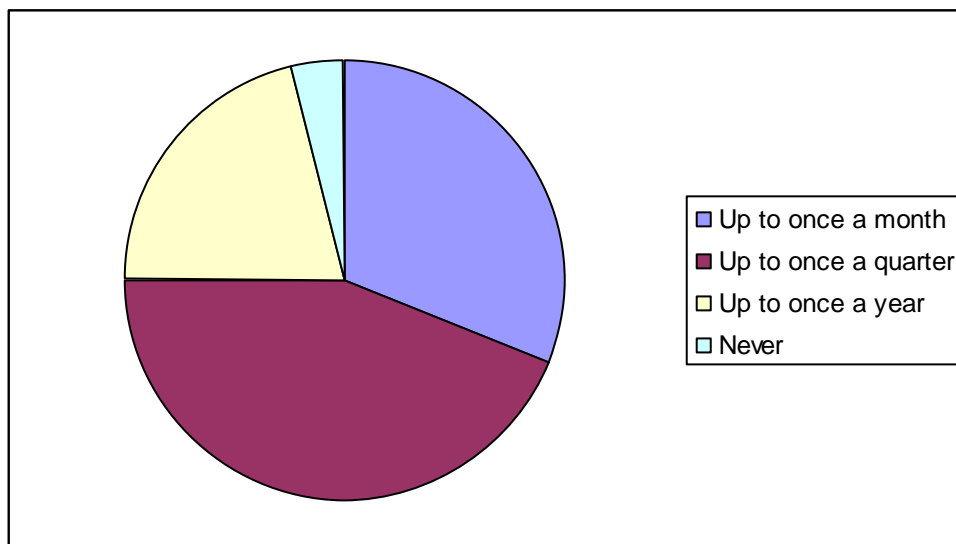
It was encouraging to find that respondents reflected a cross-section of roles across the surveyed authorities as presented in Fig 5.1. Although Equality Officers made up the greatest single category of respondents they only accounted for just under a third of all those surveyed (27 respondents or 31%). Responses were also received across a number of different authority departments including housing and care, HR and legal departments.

Fig 5.1 Survey Respondents' Roles within the Authority



The vast majority of those surveyed were in regular contact with the Equalities Unit (defined as attending meetings or events or receiving telephone based advice). Three-quarters claimed to be either in monthly or quarterly contact with the Unit and only two respondents stated that they were never in contact with Equalities Unit as shown in Fig 5.2.

Fig 5.2 Frequency of Contact with the Equalities Unit



In addition to the responses received via the web based survey, interviews were also undertaken with 15 representatives across eight

local government organisations in order to capture detailed feedback on the work of the Equalities Unit. These organisations (seven of which were local authorities and one a member authority) were selected to reflect a cross-section of authorities by size, geography, importance attached to Welsh language, political control and level of engagement with the Equalities Unit. The authorities interviewed are identified in Annex 1.

Although we cannot be certain that all local authorities took part in this review (as the web survey was conducted anonymously in order to achieve a high response rate) we are confident that the survey (which was completed by 27 Equality Officers in total), together with the fieldwork, enabled us to access a representative sample of opinions in local authorities across Wales.

5.2 Contribution to Welsh Assembly Government Policies

5.2.1 Rationale and Need

Turning to our findings, policy interviewees reported that the main drivers in the establishment of the Equalities Unit were the need to provide an equality resource for local government and support for authorities to take on board the then equalities challenges and legislative requirements. At the time of establishment it was believed that the equality agenda was less visible within local government than in other public sector bodies and that there was a need to raise its profile via the work of the Equalities Unit. Several interviewees believed that the Equalities Unit was given a remit specifically to support those authorities who were lagging behind as well as to help mainstream equalities into the work of local government. Interviewees also believed that there was a requirement upon the Equalities Unit to help develop the equalities capacity within local government.

Most of those who were interviewed believed that these strategic needs were still relevant at the time of our fieldwork. However several interviewees noted that the equalities agenda had evolved drastically since the inception of the Equalities Unit and that the agenda has since become more complex: “our understanding of what equality and human rights is much wider”. In particular it was felt that the equality and human rights agenda had broadened to include new issues beyond those of gender, race and disability and this had impacted upon the recent work of the Equalities Unit. Furthermore it was believed that the establishment of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission with its own work programme has had bearing upon the work of the Unit, particularly in the way it now has to engage with one rather than three Commissions.

Overall, local government representatives argued strongly that there was a continued need for external support delivered via the Equalities Unit. However one local government representative questioned the underlying rationale for the Equalities Unit and argued that whilst there was still a need for local authorities to receive external support, this was being provided by other statutory bodies who had greater expertise in specific areas.

Having said this there was a general consensus amongst those interviewed that the Equalities Unit was well placed to help local government meet the increasing equalities objectives imposed upon it. Most interviewees considered it an advantage that the team was “independent” and at arm’s-length from the Welsh Assembly Government. The majority of those interviewed also felt that the Equalities Unit understood the requirements of local government in Wales and could provide a “tailored” support service to them. The only exception to this was a slightly more critical view conveyed by associate members (including those non-respondents who did not participate in the survey) who argued that the Equalities Unit was overly focused on the needs of the 22 Unitary Authorities.

Local government interviewees generally believed it a strength that the service was made available by an organisation without a statutory function and as a result it could deliver a supporting rather than a policing role (which was seen as being a key remit of the EHRC). It was argued that the Equalities Unit could be much more pragmatic in its interpretation of equality legislation and could provide a much more proportionate response to the plethora of legislative demands made upon local government, as illustrated by one interviewee:

“From my point of view the EU is absolutely essential....the equalities legislation is heavy, and you not only need to know the legislation but you need to know how pragmatic you can be with it....I could be trying to run the authority ragged if I didn't understand about proportionality and the only way I can learn about proportionality is having other professionals to call on.... And it's a mature relationship. I know I can trust them”.

Another individual argued that the WLGA Equalities Unit was viewed as an important source of advice, training and information for their authority. It was valued differently from other sources of advice, training and information because it could give advice from a Welsh perspective, outlining the differences in legislation between England and Wales, and had a specific understanding of local government. Furthermore, the same person argued that as the Equalities Unit was part of the WLGA, it was viewed as being able to provide advice and support to the WLGA itself, to enable it to advise Chief Executives, Members and the Welsh Assembly Government at a strategic level. Due to its position within the WLGA, it was also thought that the Equalities Unit could help contribute towards raising the profile and status of equalities at a strategic level within individual authorities.

5.2.2 Local Government Engagement with Equalities Issues

Our fieldwork with local government representatives revealed a marked difference in approach to equalities issues and many stakeholders believed it impossible to generalise about local government's engagement with equalities issues. It was acknowledged that there were some pockets of good practice taking place, but that this was not always recognised at the strategic level as 'equalities' good practice. Some stakeholders believed that associate members (particularly police authorities) generally placed a greater priority upon equalities issues compared to local authorities.

During our fieldwork we encountered both ends of the spectrum. We interviewed representatives who argued that equalities was now a key priority for their organisation and was viewed as "one of our cross-cutting themes which is up there with sustainability". On the other hand some local government interviewees were open about admitting that equalities were not always a priority for the organisation, particularly amongst Elected Members: "I have to be honest, equalities is way down the list of priorities. I have every admiration for the work that people do, but it's the Cinderella service".

Elected Members who agreed to participate in the evaluation were also very likely to comment that their involvement with the Equalities Unit and a wide range of equality strands was quite low. In one authority no Elected Member equalities training had been held over the previous 18 months because of previous low attendance. In another, the Elected Member with responsibility for equalities issues was not prepared to participate in the evaluation, arguing that their involvement with the Equalities Unit was negligible.

This view echoed the findings of the web based survey. When asked about the level of importance attached to equalities issues by various

organisations (where 1 was very little and 5 was very much) surveyed respondents were more likely to state that their own department or unit attached a high level of importance to equalities issues (with 80% or 39 respondents giving their own Unit a score of 4 or 5) by comparison with their own authority as a whole, the WLGA or local government in general (see Fig 2.3). This is possibly of no surprise given that a significant pool of respondents had some sort of ‘equalities’ remit within their authority. In general, respondents believed that the WLGA attached a greater level of importance to equalities issues than their own authority (with 68% giving the WLGA a score of 4 or 5 compared to 51% for their own authority) and that Welsh local government as a whole placed the least amount of importance to equalities issues (with only 38% giving Welsh local government a score of 4 or 5). This suggests that respondents generally saw WLGA as ahead of the field in terms of promoting awareness of equalities issues across Welsh local government.

Fig 5.3 Importance Attached to Equalities Issues



(Where 1 = very little and 5 – very much)

Our interviews revealed that in some cases equalities was viewed by the local authorities as being the responsibility of the Equalities Officer

alone whereas in others a team of up to six people would have responsibility over different equality strands. In some cases the resources allocated to equality issues had increased as a result of the increased equality responsibilities imposed upon them but in others authorities had experienced a trend whereby the staffing resources allocated to equalities issues had reduced over time. In these latter authorities, the reduction had been justified on the basis that equalities had been moving away from multiple strands to a single equalities agenda. In particular some interviewees suggested that dedicated Welsh Language Officers were disappearing from some authorities because there was less reluctance on the part of members and officers to challenge the need to prioritise Welsh language issues than was the case for other equalities strands. In the cases where resources were being reduced the consulted argued that the Equalities Unit role was increasing in importance and value.

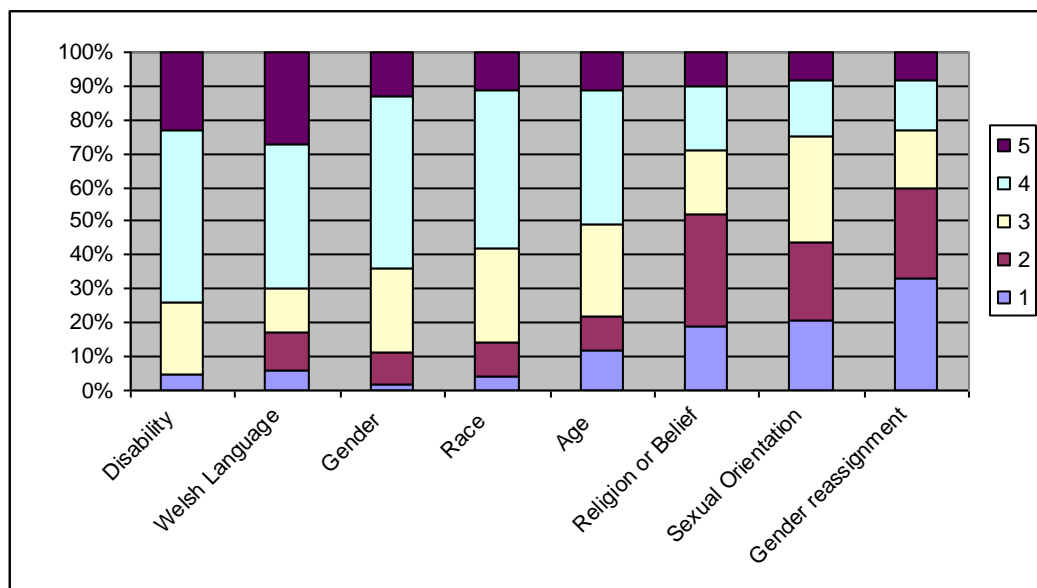
Many representatives from local authorities had witnessed the equalities function being moved from one department to another as a result of broader local authority restructuring – with many giving evidence that officers had moved from human resources departments that had an employment focus to being increasingly based in service delivery and policy departments. However examples were also given whereby officers had been relocated from policy to human resources departments. Feedback suggests that some local authorities are still grappling with finding the most appropriate home for the equalities function (with one for example having moved from policy to human resources and back to policy again in a relatively short space of time).

Our interviews with local government representatives revealed that the main focus of their equalities work has been upon meeting the legislative duties imposed upon them. These have covered disability, race and gender as well as Welsh language issues and reflects the duty placed upon local government to produce equality schemes for three of these particular groups. Others, but not all, also stressed the

focus given more recently on mainstreaming equalities across the work of their authorities.

Similar feedback was obtained via the web based survey. According to the surveyed respondents the equality strands that have received the greatest focus over the last year within local government have been disability, followed by Welsh language, gender and race. As shown in Fig 5.4 just under three-quarters of respondents (74% or 39 respondents) gave a score of 4 or 5 (where 5 was very much importance) to disability whilst the proportion for Welsh language was 70%, gender at 64% and race at 58%. Gender reassignment was seen as the equalities issue given least attention, with religion/belief and sexual orientation also being seen as less likely to be prioritised.

Figure 5.4 Importance Attached to Equality Strands within Local Government



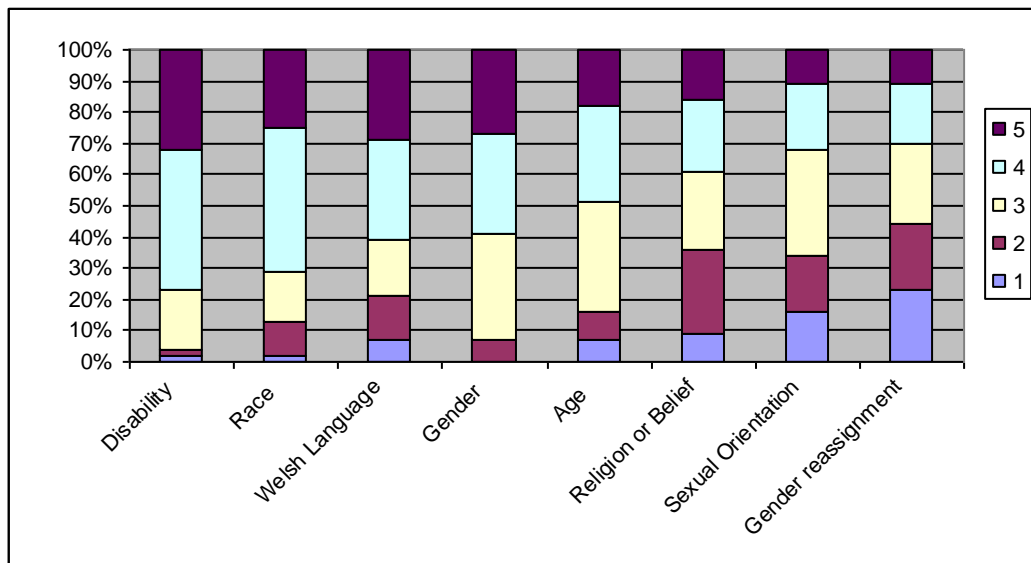
5.2.3 Developing and Meeting Objectives

The overall objective of the Equalities Unit as specified in its funding agreement is to provide advice, guidance and services to local government and the Welsh Assembly Government. Interviewees

generally felt that this objective was appropriate and that the Unit has been able to focus upon the remit given to it by the Welsh Assembly Government. Most authorities believed that the focus of the Unit's work has been well aligned with that of local government. Feedback from local authority based interviews suggested that the focus of the Unit's work has been on supporting them to meet their legislative duties and ensuring that appropriate equality schemes are put into practice. In doing so it was pointed out that the Equalities Unit has focused upon three groups (disability, gender and race) that are covered by public sector duties. As a result, it was felt by some that other equality strands as well as the Welsh language have not been prioritised within the work of the Unit.

In terms of the feedback obtained via the web based survey a fairly low proportion of surveyed respondents were prepared to give their views on the importance attached to different equality strands within the work of the Equalities Unit over the last year (suggesting that respondents were not familiar enough with its work to respond to such questions). However those who did respond believed that the focus of the Unit's work in terms of equality strands has been largely similar to those of the authorities, although race was believed to have received a greater focus (ranked second) in terms of the Unit's work and the Welsh language a slightly smaller focus, albeit still being the third most important strand.

5.4 Importance Attached to Equality Strands within Unit's Work



It is less clear from the interviews how the Unit has fulfilled its objective of providing advice and support to the Welsh Assembly Government. Very little reference has been made to this objective within the Unit's latest Business Plan for example although it does refer to 'joint project working initiatives'. Furthermore some of those interviewed questioned the impact that the Equalities Unit's lobbying activity was having upon Welsh Assembly Government policy (although in some instances it was acknowledged that this may be the result of inadequate feedback). Some interviewees also raised questions about the lack of influence the Unit appears to have had in developing the current Local Government Measure²³, given the lack of equalities focus within this proposed tool.

A few stakeholders voiced their concerns about the process currently in place to identify and set objectives for the Equalities Unit. It was argued that the objectives are currently set by the Equalities Unit within their

²³ A measure of the National Assembly for Wales passed on 28 April 2009 to make provision about arrangements by local authorities and other authorities in Wales to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions; to make provision for community strategies; and for connected purposes.

Annual Business Plan but these are rarely challenged or changed by the Welsh Assembly Government. Consultees commented upon the lack of equalities expertise within the Social Justice and Local Government Department to input into the business planning process which, it was said, has meant that relatively little direction has been given to their work from the Welsh Assembly Government. It was thought that at the time of establishing the Equalities Unit the management of its contract was given to the Social Justice and Local Government Department largely because the Equality Division lacked capacity to do so. Furthermore stakeholders felt that very little formal input has been made available via the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division (EDID) to the objective setting and business planning work of the Unit (although it was acknowledged that the informal working relationship between EDID and the Unit has been very strong). It was felt however that the recent reorganisation which brought EDID into the Social Justice and Local Government Department should help resolve this issue.

Some stakeholders (as well as local government consultees) questioned whether the Equalities Unit had managed to achieve the right balance in its work between supporting the work of Equalities Officers on the one hand and targeting senior local government leaders and managers on the other. It was felt that the Equalities Unit could have focused more upon strategic concerns such as “setting an equalities agenda” and “winning hearts and minds” issues which have the potential to influence local government at a more strategic level.

Having said this, stakeholders felt that the importance attached to equalities issues in general by the WLGA had increased over the last few years. This was reflected in the WLGA’s decision to promote the Head of the Equalities Unit to Director level within the organisation and to broaden the role to cover Social Justice: “the fact that the WLGA has a Director of Equalities and Social Justice on its management team says something”. The increasing priority given to equalities issues was

also considered to be apparent in the Unit's work over the recent year due to its efforts to meet Local Authority Chief Executives on an individual basis to discuss their approach to equalities issues. However some voiced their concerns about the lack of focus given to equalities issues at a strategic level by the WLGA and the lack of clarity about how the Unit influences the WLGA, even though it is a part of it. For example it was noted that the Equalities Unit does not have any direct input into the Local Government Measure Implementation Group. Furthermore the abandonment of the WLGA's Heads of Corporate Policy group has meant that the Equalities Unit does not have an 'obvious' conduit for promoting equality good practice at a strategic level within local authorities. Finally it was noted that equalities issues does not feature on the agenda of the SOLACE²⁴ group facilitated by the WLGA.

Several consultees were unclear about the Equalities Unit's remit in terms of Welsh language issues and were unclear about whether the Unit had a role within this area²⁵. Some argued that the Unit had not been actively involved in this area apart from the facilitation of the Rhwydiaith Network and many were forthcoming in their comments about the lack of recent Rhwydiaith meetings. Interviews with WGLA representatives revealed that the lack of recent Rhwydiaith meetings had been a result of the network's co-ordinator being on maternity leave, with no interim arrangements having been put in place, as opposed to a lack of commitment on behalf of the Unit to maintain this network.

²⁴ Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

²⁵ In reality, we understand that Welsh Language issues come under the remit of the Lifelong Learning, Leisure and Information Directorate within the WLGA although the Equalities Unit is responsible for the facilitation of Rhwydiaith.

5.2.4 Welsh Assembly Government local government equality aims

Several stakeholders raised questions about whether the Equalities Unit's work was helping to achieve Welsh Assembly Government local government equality aims. Some believed that its work was largely driven by UK equalities legislation, which of course is a non devolved driver. Others argued that the equalities agenda was not particularly closely aligned with the core business of local government modernisation.

Some stakeholders went further and questioned the lack of clarity and detail given to equalities issues within the Welsh Assembly Government's local government policies, which in turn was said to have resulted in an unclear steer for the work of the Equalities Unit. According to some stakeholders this also made it difficult to judge the extent to which the work of the Unit has helped to achieve the Assembly Government's local government equality policies. It was thought for example that the Social Justice and Local Government Department's section of the Single Equality Scheme lacks specific local government equalities commitments which could act as a driver for the work of the Equalities Unit. Furthermore some stakeholders argued that the lack of reference to equalities issues within Welsh Assembly Government guidance notes and performance improvement targets to local authorities also restricts the Equalities Unit's ability to persuade authorities down particular routes. The new proposed Local Government Measure was quoted as an example in that it focuses on areas such as "improving fairness" rather than achieving equality. A similar view was given on Local Authorities Improvement Agreements and the lack of focus on equalities monitoring within the work of the Wales Audit Office.

5.3 Review of Equalities Unit Provision

This section considers the eight specific elements of support made available by the Equalities Unit, the value attached to this support and the difference made to local government by this support. We then go on to discuss some of the Equalities Unit's partnership working and alternative sources of support available to local government.

5.3.1 Website

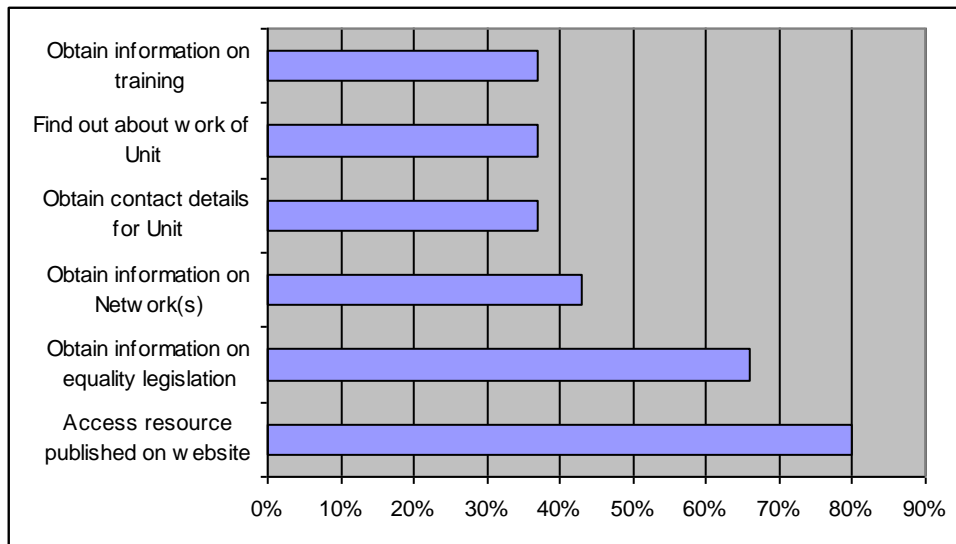
The Equalities Unit website is hosted on the WLGA's website²⁶ under the Equalities and Social Justice section. It contains information on five areas of the Unit's work, namely:

- Networks (Aims, Objectives, Agendas, Minutes and Presentations);
- Training (Research and Training Resources);
- Briefings and Bulletins;
- Equalities and Human Rights Legislation;
- Equality Improvement Framework for Wales.

Awareness and use of the website was fairly healthy. Two-thirds of those who responded to the web-based survey (69% or 35 respondents) stated that they had accessed the Unit's website, whilst the remaining third (31% or 16 respondents) stated that they had not. The main reasons for accessing the website had been to access a resource published on the website followed by obtaining information on equality legislation, as illustrated in Fig 5.5 below.

Figure 5.5 Reasons for Accessing EU's website

²⁶ <http://www.wlga.gov.uk>



The large majority of those surveyed (86% or 30 respondents) believed that the WLGA EU's website was either very good or good. The remaining 14% (or five respondents) rated it as poor. A slightly higher proportion (at 94% or 33 respondents) believed the website content was either very useful or useful and only two respondents believed that it was not particularly useful. When asked how they had been able to use the information obtained via the website respondents offered the following feedback:

- To access information that could be fed into day to day activities such as developing “equality policies”, writing “reports” and preparing “training material”;
- To inform project related work: “using it to develop a project plan to achieve status of Equality Improvement Framework”;
- To keep abreast of developments and up to date with legislation: “up to date information and resources, more easily accessible than the EHRC!”;
- To keep in contact with the Networks, particularly on the part of those who were unable to take part: “I cannot attend the Equality Exchange meetings and access minutes off the website”;
- To establish contact with Unit staff: “the Unit when contacted via the web always offer prompt and sound advice”.

A few respondents noted that the information made available on the Unit's website could occasionally be out of date or inaccurate. Furthermore one respondent noted that they would usually find a conversation with the Units' staff more beneficial than accessing the website resources. Several respondents suggested ways of improving the website and these included both content related and access related issues:

- Developing an interactive website giving members the opportunity to up-load their own examples and materials;
- Providing more accurate information on the website by checking with the authorities that facts included about organisations are accurate;
- Making available more best practice examples from other authorities: "by developing a national resource website with documents and policies development by authorities";
- A greater focus on "the various strands of equality" and Welsh language in particular: "the Welsh language promotion agenda";
- More up to date information such as on "national issues" or "the work which the Unit is either undertaking or is in the process of planning to undertake";
- Improved linkages on areas such as consultation exercises ("WLGA consultation responses on equalities") and learning Welsh ("links to Welsh for Adults Centres");
- Making it easier to find information: "the training modules for members is within the 'Subjects' section and gets lost within the large amount of material available in that section".

Case Studies

From fieldwork with case-study local authorities and other stakeholders, it became apparent that those interviewed were not particularly frequent users of the website, preferring instead to use

alternative methods such as phone contact or rely on the information made available via various bulletins to elicit information from the Unit. Local authority interviewees were slightly more critical of the website and argued that it was not as useful as other sources of information made available by the Equalities Unit. As might be expected stakeholders made less use of it than authority representatives. One local government representative commented: “the website is pretty basic – I don’t think there’s much on there to be honest”.

5.3.2 Equalities Briefings

The Equalities Unit has prepared two annual Equalities Briefings²⁷, aimed specifically at Elected Members, in response to Members’ request that they would welcome greater communication and briefing on equality issues. The briefings produced to date have discussed legislative issues such as the Equality Act 2006, Gender Equality Duty and the Equality Bill as well as more generic themes such as “What would success look like in five years?” At the time of our evaluation the 2009 briefing had not been produced.

There was a strong awareness of the Equalities Briefings amongst both the surveyed respondents and those who were interviewed. 73% of those surveyed (or 37 respondents) had come across the Equalities Briefings produced by the Unit and those who had done so rated the resource as either very good (30%) or good (70%). All but one stated that they were also either very useful or useful. Interviewees were also generally upbeat about the quality and usefulness of the Equalities Briefings produced by the Equalities Unit with one authority noting in particular that such resources were always “fantastically well written”.

²⁷ The 2007 and 2008 Equalities Briefings can be accessed from <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/english/equalities-briefings/>

When asked how the information made available via the Equalities Briefings helped them in their place of work a range of uses were stated including:

- To ensure that respondents were kept informed of developments in equalities issues and equalities legislation: “it keeps me up to date with what’s going on in equalities” and “excellent resource to update knowledge and share with colleagues” (the fact that information was made available via one resource in a succinct manner was identified as a particular strength by several respondents);
- To help respondents with day to day activities such as writing reports and preparing Equality related policies particularly in terms of “setting the national context for any internal Council reports”;
- To help keep colleagues informed of equalities developments “they are useful as a means of disseminating information through the department” and “have used to provide up-dates and briefings for managers”;
- To learn from the experience of others: “The Equality Briefings are a good tool in sharing information across all LA's”.

Several respondents made suggestions on the way the Equalities Briefings could be improved and these included:

- Greater use of local Welsh examples “when discussing equality principles and legislation – the legislation at work in essence” and “greater use of case studies”;
- Inclusion of good practice examples across Welsh authorities with an opportunity for authority engagement to feedback on issues;
- A greater focus on equalities legislation and less on promoting bilingual communities/social cohesion;

- Improving the links to websites: “the links could be easier to access”;
- Reducing their length and issuing briefings more frequently: “occasionally they are a bit long”.

5.3.3 Equalities and Social Justice Bulletins (E-bulletins)

The Equalities and Social Justice Bulletin provides information relating to equalities and social justice in Wales and the UK to policy makers and practitioners. They are made available on a monthly basis and the latest three versions can be accessed from the Unit’s website²⁸. The themes covered in recent bulletins have included research, publications, events, Welsh Assembly Government consultation exercises and Equalities Unit projects.

Again there was good awareness and use being made of the E-bulletin produced by the Equalities Unit. Just over three-quarters of the surveyed sample (76% or 39 respondents) had come across the E-bulletins produced by the Unit and all of the local government interviewees were aware of these. Similarly to the Equalities Briefings all of those surveyed who had seen the bulletins believed the resources to be either very good or good and had found them either very useful or useful. Respondents had used the information made available in the E-bulletins in very similar ways to the Equalities Briefings and no specific ways of improving them were suggested.

Comments made by those interviewed on a face-to-face basis on the E-bulletins were also positive in their nature:

- “very helpful – keeps me informed about what’s happening about equalities across Wales....events, new policies, areas of work that particular authorities are working on”;

²⁸ <http://www.wlga.gov.uk/english/equalities-briefings/>

- “Very good and all in one easy place” particularly as they come with web based links to the documents bring discussed.

5.3.4 “What about Welsh” Trainers Resource Pack DVD

In 2002 the Rhwydiaith Network undertook an assessment of existing language awareness training materials available within local government at the time and concluded that there was a significant gap in the materials available. The “What about Welsh” Trainers Resources Pack DVD was developed by the Equalities Unit in conjunction with the Rhwydiaith Network and published in October 2006 to address this gap. The resource contains a range of information and supporting materials to assist trainers in delivering language awareness training across local government.

The DVD is in our view a very comprehensive resource that could be tailored to any language awareness sessions within local government. It covers six areas in detail and provides learning objectives and personal action planning for each of these elements:

- History of the Welsh Language;
- Welsh Language Act 1993;
- Statistical Data on the Welsh Language;
- Welsh Language and Employment;
- Language Awareness;
- Mainstreaming.

As with any training resource however some of the data and information available in the DVD has become outdated and, given that it was prepared prior to the development of the Equalities Improvement Framework, it is not surprising that it makes no reference to this tool.

A much lower proportion, at just under a third of the surveyed sample (31% or 16 respondents) stated that they had seen the “What about Welsh” Trainers Resource Pack DVD prepared by the Unit. Overall consultees also had a lower recollection of this product and were more reluctant to comment upon its content and usefulness. In comparison to the E-bulletins and the Equalities Briefings, respondents were slightly less impressed with the quality and usefulness of this DVD resource. When asked about the way in which the DVD had assisted them in their place of work many surveyed respondents commented that they had not seen or used the resource²⁹. For those who had, the main use had been in preparation and delivery of staff training on issues such as Welsh in the Workplace and Language Awareness training. One respondent commented that the Welsh Language Board’s training DVD and booklet had been more useful to them in the past than the Unit’s DVD resource. In response to a question about ways of improving the resource many respondents were of the view that the DVD resource needed to be better publicised by the Unit: “I didn’t know that it existed”.

5.3.5 Training

Most of the training made available by the Unit has focused on providing an introduction to, and raising awareness of, equality and diversity within local government in Wales with the view to developing skills and improving the delivery of services made available by the authorities to communities that they serve. Most of the training made available has been targeted at specific groups within local government with the “Valuing Difference, Creating Success” training for example focusing upon Senior Managers and their role in implementing and demonstrating a corporate commitment to equality practice within their organisation.

²⁹ Even though they responded positively when first questioned about the resource in the survey!

Our evaluation focused upon three type of courses delivered the most by the Equalities Unit – namely “Valuing Difference, Creating Success” (Senior Management Training); “Training Equality Trainers” and “Making a Difference” (Police Authority Training). Survey feedback was obtained via the web-based survey as well as a sub survey which was issued to those who had participated on these training courses. The number of responses received are shown in Table 5.1:

Table 5.1 Number of Respondents who had attended each course.

	Main Survey	Training Survey	Total
Valuing Difference, Creating Success	8	9	17
Training Equality Trainers	13	16	29
Making a Difference	3	7	10
Total	24	32	56

Overall the overwhelming majority of surveyed respondents found the training courses to be either of good or very good quality (Fig 5.6) and similarly the majority found the training courses to be of use to them (Fig 5.7). Feedback was slightly better for the Valuing Difference course. The findings show, however, that those who believed a course to be of very good quality did not always find that it had been very useful to them. This was particularly true of respondents who had attended the Making a Difference course (although care must be taken when interpreting the findings due to the small size of this sample). There was a somewhat larger dissenting minority in respect of the quality of the provision in the case of the Training Equality Trainers course, with some 11% of the view that the training had been poor or very poor and 15% of the view that it had not been useful.

Fig 5.6 Quality of Training Provision

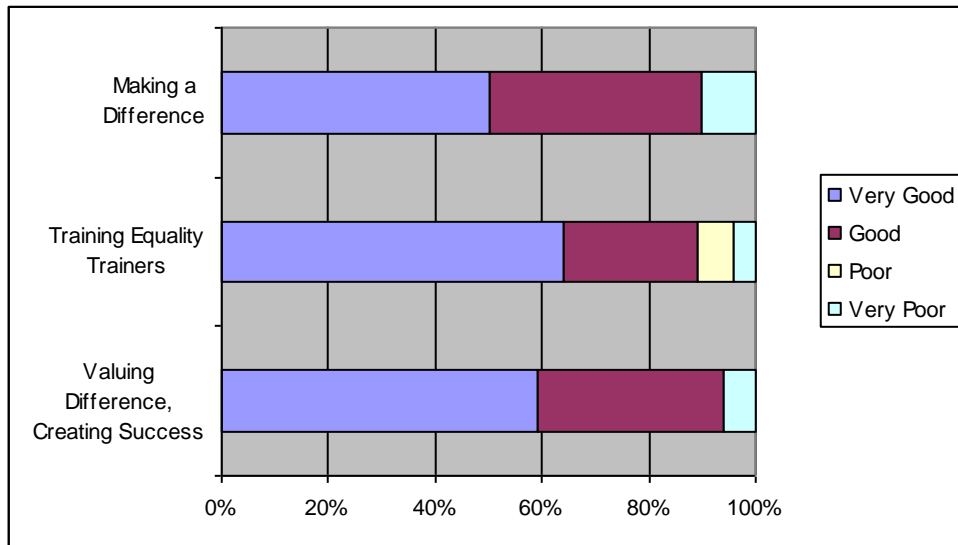
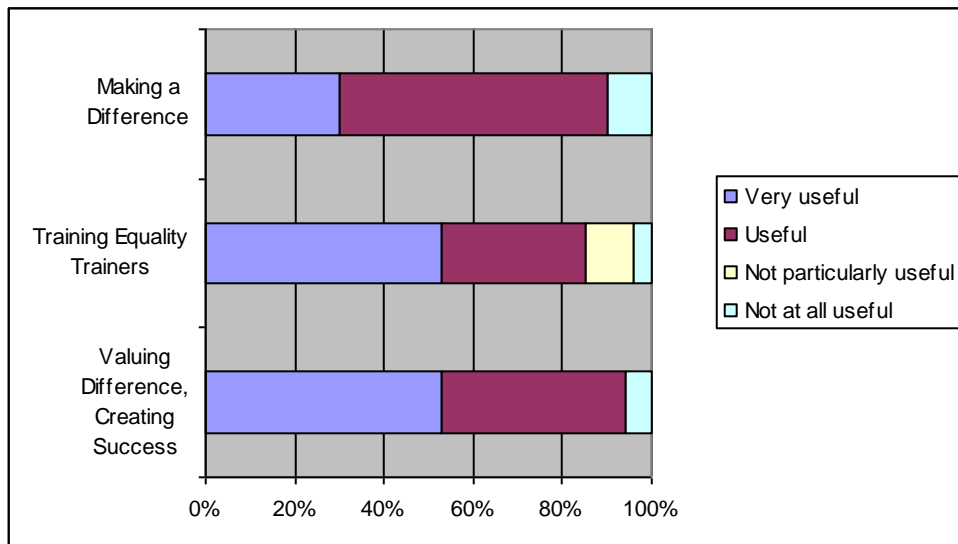


Fig 5.7 Usefulness of Training Provision



Interviewees also felt that the training made available by the Equalities Unit had been of a high standard and had demonstrated a detailed understanding of public sector issues. It was noted that the trainer had been very open and flexible so as to accommodate the training needs of individual organisations. Furthermore several interviewees who had been involved within the training believed that senior authority managers had benefited from the trainer's understanding of how the Welsh Assembly Government works.

Valuing Difference Creating Success

The Valuing Difference Creating Success course would appear to have been particularly effective in raising awareness of equality issues across a range of departments and as one respondent stated it “has resulted in getting more out of teams recognising that everyone has a contribution towards achieving goals”. Some respondents were able to evidence the impact of the training by providing some specific examples and these included:

- “Following the course one senior manager went back to organise a department conference and equalities was an important aspect of the day and another agreed to fund and promote an awareness raising programme for homophobic bullying in our secondary schools”;
- “[The] training was so good, the trainer was invited to attend our annual staff conference”;
- “This has lead [sic] to awareness workshops [on equalities] being held in the Department's annual conference earlier this year”.

Not many suggestions for improvement were forthcoming, with the majority of respondents of the view that there was no need to make changes to the current provision as it had been “concise”, “an enjoyable day”, “well presented”, “provided realistic scenarios” and delivered by a “great trainer”.

Interviewees who had been involved with the training course reiterated many of the points made by those surveyed, particularly around the good quality of the trainer. Some referred to the fact that the trainer was able to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the Assembly’s policies, and how these applied to local government agendas and priorities.

Training Equality Trainers

Respondents were able to identify several ways in which the Training Equality Trainers event had helped them with their own work. These included:

- Improving equality knowledge “we learnt so much over a couple of days” and “[it] gave me a sound basic understanding of the equalities legislation”;
- Increasing confidence levels: “[the training] increased my confidence in speaking in front of an audience” and it “gave me the confidence to relay the necessary information in an interested [sic] and authoritative way”;
- Initiating an equalities training programme: “it gave me the skills and the confidence to have a go at it myself, and together with another colleague we trained in excess of 100 people on all day session in our organisation, on how to do equality impact assessment”;
- Improving the quality of training provision: “used materials to improve courses” and “helped me to re-design our in-house customer service and equalities training”;
- Advising colleagues within own authority “I have used the knowledge and material when advising on areas such as recruitment/appraisal/DDA”;
- Enhancing motivational levels: “[the training] motivated all who attended”.

One Equality Officer who was interviewed had found the Training Equality Trainers training to be particularly useful in examining and reflecting upon her own training style. It had given her the opportunity to modify her training approach which she felt was resulting in securing a better response from participants. The training had also enabled her

to reassess the way in which she was promoting equalities training to colleagues by focusing upon the business benefits of doing so.

It would appear that the Training Equality Trainers provision had less value for the most experienced trainers who participated: “the training did not particularly inform or improve my own role as I was already a trainer very familiar and experienced in delivery of equality training”. A few respondents also drew attention to the lack of follow up support that they had received (from either the Unit or their own authority) and on occasion this had resulted in those respondents not being able to realise their original objective of delivering training within their own authority: “[the] original aim was to run workshops within my authority working with Equalities Officer (and others) but this was not taken forward”.

Some suggestions were made for the possible improvement of the Training Equality Trainers provision and these included:

- Providing more “hands-on practice” and “more practical examples” within the session and a greater emphasis on “the application of the training in the workplace”;
- Providing some further “progressive training” courses or “refresher courses”;
- Making some changes to the course format such as devoting less time to “the preparation for and delivery of the presentations”, videoing the presentation as an additional learning opportunity and providing a longer course over one or two weeks to look at other issues such as influencing skills and change management;
- Exploring the possibility of accrediting the course to enable participants to obtain credits towards qualification.

Making a Difference

The benefits of attending the Making a Difference course were not as well documented by the surveyed respondents. However the comments made on ways in which the training had improved practice included:

- Heightened awareness: “it led to an increase in awareness, even from staff who thought they had already ‘done equality training’”;
- Generated interest in equality issues: “it generated a greater understanding and appreciation of equality and diversity issues and enabled us to discuss them openly and directly with various groups”.

None of the respondents could identify ways in which the training could have been improved stating that it had been of a high standard and an enjoyable experience.

5.3.6 Equality Improvement Framework

The Equality Improvement Framework (EIF) for Welsh Local Government was developed by the WLGA and published in January 2008. It has been developed “to provide further support to local authorities in putting the arrangements in place to mainstream equality throughout the organisation” and also to “promote, manage and improve equality within local government and support local authorities in the delivery of their legal duties”.

The EIF builds on the earlier Equality Standard for Local Government in Wales. Its aim is to promote equality through leadership and performance management, providing a framework for assessment and action on equalities. The EIF very much reflects and supports the Wales Programme for Improvement framework for assessment and improvement, together with its emphasis on stakeholder and community involvement, in the drive for greater accountability. A major

difference between the earlier Equality Standard and the EIF is that it is a management framework rather than an equality toolkit. In its introduction the EIF states that it “must be integrated into the management structure of the authority”.

The EIF has four aims, notably to:

- Deal consistently with all aspects of the equalities agenda;
- Make equalities an essential part of improving services to the community, and not just an employment-related issue;
- Enable councils to coherently plan and monitor the way they meet the various statutory responsibilities and expectations of the Equality and Human Rights Commission; and
- Relate equality policies more clearly to the general culture of improvement in performance management and service delivery.

It is based on 11 improvement elements, which cover corporate governance of equality, equality outcomes and how equality is managed at a corporate and at a direct service level. It is accompanied by a self-assessment guide for local authorities, which was produced by the WLGA in partnership with the Centre for Local Policy Studies and Edge Hill University.

Three EIF projects were selected by the Equalities Unit as pilot projects and each one was intended to focus on a particular dimension of the EIF, namely:

- Neath Port Talbot: Vision and Values;
- Blaenau Gwent: Self-Assessment;
- Flintshire: Setting Equality Targets.

In our view the EIF is a good quality framework in that it provides a set of ‘hooks’ on which an authority can hang its plans and targets for improvement. The EIF Self-assessment guide gives a comprehensive,

step-by-step guidance to local authorities which includes easy-to-read diagrams of the equality performance management cycle and self-assessment cycle and guidance on how to conduct a self assessment. The guide makes it very clear that self-assessments should be carried out by more than one person and that the self-assessment process requires leadership and a range of skills at both senior and management levels. However the guide does not suggest how an authority, especially one where there is weak engagement of senior managers, should arrange an alternative self-assessment. Neither does it suggest how the Equalities Unit could support the work of an authority at this strategic level if it encounters such lack of engagement.

The EIF guidance suggests several forms of evidence which may be used by an authority within a self-assessment. However in our view two sources of evidence often advocated in other performance management frameworks which have an equalities dimension (such as the Peer Review method³⁰) have been omitted. These are evidence gathered through feedback from front line staff and observation, such as by an assessor spending time with a front-line service.

Whilst the guidance gives examples of what an authority could report, it does not in our view go into great detail regarding what steps an authority might go through in order to reach the point of being able to report it. We believe that the EIF guidance could be developed further in order to outline practical steps to be taken when carrying out a self-assessment. It could also include guidance on collecting evidence to measure improvements. In our view the EIF guidance could be expanded to include advice on learning and development opportunities

³⁰ The Peer Review method was advocated as good practice in the Customer Services: Principles to Practice (CS:P2P) pilot project led by Torfaen CBC and supported by the Connecting South East Wales Partnership Board as well as the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), the IDeA and the Welsh Local Government Association. The project has been a pilot study designed to test the viability of a Welsh Framework for Customer Service Excellence built upon the IDeA's proven Peer Review methodology.

to enable authorities to develop the capability required to carry out the self assessment process.

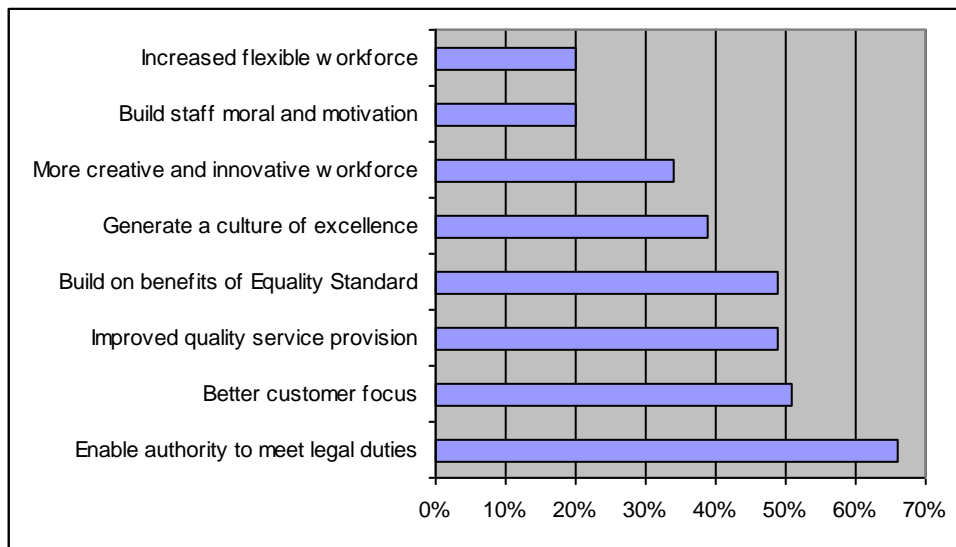
Finally the EIF guidance recommends a detailed self-assessment be undertaken on a three-yearly cycle, or more often where the need is identified. Increasingly other frameworks are recommending that assessment takes place on a phased basis, but annually³¹ in order to maintain momentum and engagement, and avoiding the risk of people forgetting about the framework until the next assessment is due. In this context it might be sensible for the EIF guidance to recommend an annual but phased approach to carrying out future self-assessments.

Our fieldwork revealed a very mixed view of the EIF – although there was good awareness of the product amongst those surveyed and interviewed (with 79% of those surveyed - or 41 of 53 respondents - saying that they were familiar with the EIF) both surveyed respondents and interviewees gave somewhat mixed views about the quality and usefulness of the resource, although a majority of those surveyed believed that the resource was either of good or very good quality (76%) and thought that the resource was either useful or very useful (61%).

In terms of expected benefits the majority of surveyed respondents familiar with the EIF believed that it would enable their authority to meet its legal duties (Fig 5.8), followed by better customer focus. Not many respondents believed that it would lead to a more flexible workforce or help towards building staff moral and motivation.

³¹ For example, after the initial comprehensive assessment, an authority would repeat its assessment of its Corporate Government arrangements after one year, its assessment of its Equality Outcomes after 2 years, and its assessment of its approach to Managing Equality after 3 years.

Fig 5.8 Benefits Expected from EIF amongst Surveyed Respondents



Base=41

When asked how the information made available in the EIF had helped them in their place of work, many respondents and interviewees appeared to struggle to give a positive response. Many commented that they were very much in the early days of considering the EIF approach and had either found the approach daunting or questioned its underlying value:

- “I am finding it hard to get started. There is so much vague information that I can’t see my way in”;
- “It is a highly academic publication that will not be adopted by managers. I find it very difficult to understand and wade through and feel it is inadequate for purpose”;
- “I’m not convinced of the worth of the EIF to local government. Any such framework would need to add value to our work in order to be of use. It is bureaucratic and additional to the schemes that we are legally obliged to publish. It isn’t aligned with the performance framework for Wales”.

Feedback from those interviewed also pointed to the difficulties in trying to initiate the implementation of the EIF. There was widespread

recognition that the three EIF pilot projects selected were not making consistent progress. Whilst one (Blaenau Gwent) was perceived to be running well the other two (Neath and Flintshire) were not considered to be up and running.

Several interviewees regarded the framework as a huge challenge and as one commented “it requires a forklift truck to pick it up”. Another commented “it’s like reading a theory book, but what I want to understand is how this applies to the local authority to improve things”. Equality Officers in particular were daunted by the prospect of where to start with the EIF and one commented upon the fear of moving away from the safety of their current processes in case they no longer met their current equality duty commitments. There was also a general call upon the Unit to better engage senior managers’ and members’ interest in the EIF as this would support the work of Equalities Officers in moving the framework forward.

Having said this some individuals were able to identify ways in which the EIF was supporting their work and these included:

- To help mainstream equality within the authority;
- To help develop policy;
- To help monitor progress and milestones achieved within the evidence based approach;
- Using the EIF in conjunction with the public duties to create a Single Equality Scheme, particularly with the introduction of the new Equalities Bill,
- To help make the connection between EIF and the Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI).

Surveyed respondents and interviewees who were familiar with the EIF called upon the Unit to look at two aspects of the resource in further detail. Firstly it was felt that there was a need to improve the level of

guidance made available by the Unit for the implementation of the EIF and this guidance should include sharing best practice, practical examples and offering “clearer and more straightforward advice”. In order to start implementing the Framework there was a call for more examples of how it had worked in practice “we need to understand what had been achieved as opposed to what processes have been adopted”. There was an appreciation however that such examples were currently limited given the fact that there had only been limited progress within the three EIF pilots currently being delivered.

Secondly it was suggested that a much simpler, less academic framework would have been better suited to the needs of local government: “make it shorter, simpler, more succinct, with clear, straightforward benchmarks. It can still have teeth but the waffle can be cut out”.

29 of the surveyed respondents had attended an Equality Improvement Framework Workshop or training event delivered by the Equalities Unit and of these the majority had found the event of good/very good quality (83%) and of use to them in their work (75%). There was a general consensus that the events had been an useful introduction to the Framework and how it should operate: “it was a good starting point” but respondents tended to reinforce the key message highlighted above around the need for further guidance in terms of implementation and a greater focus on the practical rather than academic side of the framework. Of particular use had been the sharing of experiences by those authorities involved in the piloting of the EIF: “the inclusion of information from someone who has made progress was useful and has made me rethink our approach”.

It was also argued that the value of the event had been greatest where both the equality officer and performance manager from an authority had attended the EIF workshop and that this should have been stressed at the invitation stage: “I attended the meeting with my

performance management officer and it presented an opportunity to look at the work of the Council together by placing equalities at the centre of our work in terms of service provision for the public". Equality Officers who had attended without their performance management colleague argued that their low understanding of the performance agenda had left them with "more questions than answers" and believed that the session had been "very focused on the improvement agenda, which is not something many equality officers are familiar with". It is worth noting that a handful of respondents left the events feeling that the EIF was of no value to them: "I still have a problem in believing that the EIF is of use".

It would appear that the authorities surveyed were at different stages in terms of their implementation of the EIF. The large majority of those who responded (66% or 23 of 35 respondents) stated that the EIF was either under discussion or that their authority had given a commitment to its implementation but not put this into practice. Only four respondents noted that it had been partially implemented whilst the remaining eight respondents noted that either no step had been taken as yet or that they had no intention of implementing the framework.

A relatively small number of respondents (14) noted that they had received advice or support from the Unit on the implementation of the Equality Improvement Framework. Most of this advice had come via the EIF workshops or Networks although there was recognition that should they need authority specific advice it would be forthcoming when requested.

Overall interviewees held mixed views about the value of the EIF in moving forward – some believed that it could become a particularly strong tool for local government on the introduction of the Single Equality Bill whilst others were hoping for a revised more user-friendly approach to come into place after the passage into law of the new Equalities Bill: "it's a half way house....Once the Act comes in and

there are specific duties...may be the recommendations and action points will be a bit more clearly defined for us". One authority believed the EIF, which was essentially considered "an academic piece of work" rather than a practical tool, to be at odds with the Assembly's policy on performance management which was focused on taking a robust and measureable approach to outcomes. A few also stressed the need for the Local Authority Measure and EIF to be better aligned and for the work of the Wales Audit Office to address equalities issues in greater detail.

5.3.7 Equalities Networks

The Equalities Unit has been responsible for the facilitation of four networks over the last few years. These networks have been:

- The Equalities Network which is attended by Equalities Officers and continues to meet on a quarterly and national basis;
- The Elected Members Equality Champion network which is attended by Elected Members and continues to meet every four to six months;
- The Rhwydiaith Network which is attended by Officers with responsibility over Welsh language but which has not met recently.
- The Equality Training Network which was only intended to be held over the duration of the Equalities Trainers Training and has since been disbanded.

Terms of reference are in place for the three Networks that currently meet and these generally appear to focus upon the discussion of experiences and good practice, providing a mechanism for keeping members up-to-date with developments in relation to the equality agenda and developing working relationships with a range of organisations to provide advice, guidance, and information on equality

matters. However in the case of each Network their terms of references appear outdated (for example reference is made to the Equality Standard as opposed to the new Equality Improvement Framework and no reference made to the Equality and Human Rights Commission). A light touch review of their agenda items does suggest, however, that the Networks' foci have evolved since their Terms of Reference were prepared and are in keeping with equality legislative developments as well as local government changes.

The majority of those surveyed (63% or 34 respondents) had participated in one or more of the Unit's four Networks that were covered by the survey. The most popular by some distance in terms of attendance was the Equalities Network (attended by 27 respondents or 50%), followed by the Elected Members Equality Champions networks and the Equality Trainers Network (both attended by 10 respondents or 19% of the sample) and the Rhwydiaith Network (attended by 9 respondents or 17% of the sample).

Overall the feedback on the usefulness of the Equalities Trainers Network was the most positive – with all ten respondents of the view that all four aspects about which specific questions were asked (EU briefings/updates, external presentations, networking with other Equalities Trainers and the opportunity to discuss best practice examples) were either very useful or useful. Feedback on the Rhwydiaith Network was less positive than for the other networks, although the majority of respondents here too were positive: for example, only two out of nine or a quarter of those responding, took the view that the external presentations received at these meetings had not been useful.

Across the four networks the most valuable aspect of attending was deemed to be the opportunity to network with other members/officers (cited as being either very useful or useful by 96% of the Equalities Network members and all of the Elected Members Champion Network

for example) and the opportunity to discuss best practice examples (cited by all of the Elected Members Champion Network and 92% of the Equalities Network members).

When asked to identify how their attendance at the Equalities Network assisted them in their work respondents gave several examples including:

- Learning from sharing best practice and keeping up-to-date with equalities legislation and developments: “helps to ensure that I am up-to-date on performance improvement, new legislation and relevant policy developments at UK & Welsh govt level”;
- Gaining comfort from knowing that other officers were facing the same issues: “it is helpful to meet other Equality practitioners and discuss common issues / problems”;
- Identifying key equality priorities for moving forward: “it helps to prioritise what work needs to be implemented in order to comply with the Equality Legislation”;
- Stimulating new thinking and new ideas: “provides ideas for doing new things or the same things differently”.

The response from one respondent summarises comments made by several others: “the Equalities network meetings are a fantastic opportunity to find out what others in the same arena are working on and how they are approaching the issues. The network is well-run, the agenda items are always useful and topical, and there is always time for useful discussion and questions during the meeting. I always walk away with helpful information that assists with my day job”.

However, several respondents gave suggestions on the way the Equalities Network could be improved and these included:

- Making changes to the frequency (“possibly one more meeting every year to reduce the gap between current ones”) and location of meetings (border between South/Mid/North Wales and locations better served by public transport “I do not find it particularly practical to attend, located as they are away from regular public transport and at considerable distance for most attendees”);
- Facilitating more regional networks and less national groups;
- Improving the Chairing of the group: “some people go off on tangents that are more of a personal grumble or outpouring than useful information to share”;
- Giving a greater focus on certain issues such as “employment issues” and “comparative studies and bench-marking”;
- Making a change in format of meetings: “more opportunities to do group work and learn from each other about practice”.

Very little feedback on the Elected Members Equality Champion network was given by respondents. Some general comments were made on the value of the Network such as “keeps me informed and up to date” and “better informs Councillors for more political support for the agenda”. A few suggestions were made on the way the Network could be improved, notably that there should be more frequent meetings and more joint meetings with the Equalities Officers.

A number of the points made already about the Equalities Officers Network also applied to the Rhwydiaith Network in terms of its value (sharing best practice and learning from others) with respondents making comments such as “Rhwydiaith was important for Language Officers to discuss problems and share good practice”. However several commented upon the fact that Rhwydiaith had not met for a considerable length of time. One respondent went as far as suggesting that the Welsh Language Board had recently begun to hold its own meetings for Language Officers “to possibly fill the gap”.

There was a general consensus that the Unit needed to reinstate the Rhwydiath meetings: “there is a real need to re-start these [Rhwydiath meetings] as there has been so much pressure on language issues because of cost arguments – the agenda is too important to let Rhwydiath disappear completely”. However, a few respondents also called for the network to be made more focused - “the presentations [were] far too general in content to be of any practical assistance” - and for the meetings to be “more focused on specific topic areas”.

Only a handful of respondents chose to comment upon the value of the Equalities Trainers Network (possibly due them finding it difficult to recall these sessions) and it would appear that the main way in which the network assisted respondents with their work was in developing training packages. In moving forward it was suggested by one respondent that there might be value in building equality issues into the training made available for general local authority trainers: “it may be more useful to create opportunities to build equality into other trainer networks i.e. social care etc”.

The interviews reinforced the views of those surveyed – it was generally felt that the Equalities Officers Network was the most useful and nearly all of the Equality Officers interviewed were regular attendants of this Network. However one Equalities Officer did not attend many of the meetings and argued that the benefits of attending and losing a whole day from work did not balance against the loss and disruption this caused. It became apparent that a self-organised North Wales Equalities Officer network meets on a regular basis. It was felt by some that these meetings were more useful than the Equalities Unit meetings as they concentrate on local issues which are perceived to be more relevant to those attending and are more likely to lead to joint working in comparison to an all Wales network.

5.3.8 Other Advice and Support

Just under half of those surveyed who responded (45% or 20 of 44 respondents) claimed to have received some other kind of support from the Unit not covered elsewhere in the questionnaire. This support was mainly sourced for the following purposes:

- General ad-hoc advice, information or useful contacts , usually via the telephone and occasionally via e-mail;
- Support with training activities such as training for Senior managers and awareness raising sessions such as those for Elected Members;
- Help with responding to policy consultations and inputting the national perspective.

It was clear that the expertise and knowledge of the staff within the Unit was highly regarded and there was a general consensus amongst respondents and interviewees that the Unit was also very approachable and helpful. As one commented “their knowledge of best practice is vast and I particularly appreciate their very practical approach to the difficult subject of meeting the legislative and citizen's needs”.

Respondents were asked to identify the difference that this other support provided by the Unit had made to them and the authority. Responses ranged from “very little” to “a big difference” but overall very few examples were provided of the way in which this sort of assistance from the Unit had impacted. In the main respondents argued that having the Unit was of great assistance to them in bringing the national perspective to the table, keeping them up to date with equalities information, functioning as an “external critical friend” and giving direction to pilot projects. It is worth highlighting the experiences of two respondents in particular:

“It helped to clarify some issues around WAG's approach to the Single Equality Bill specific duties. I was able to have an interesting discussion with the Unit about my views and this was then further discussed at a later network meeting”.

“It remains useful for me or elected members to get advice from a body that has our interest at heart. It provides a way for the authority to influence policy development at Westminster or the Assembly with other councils, which we could not co-ordinate separately. It is distinct from interest groups, commissions, boards, WAG etc. and yet facilitates good relations with them”.

5.3.9 Other Sources of Support

The majority of surveyed respondents who responded to the question (83%) stated that they accessed information or support on equalities issues from other organisations with the most popular source being the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) (used by just over half of those surveyed) followed by Welsh Assembly Government at just under half and IDeA, the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government, which has an England and Wales remit, with just over 30%(see Fig 5.9). Other sources of support accessed (usually by one or two respondents in each instance) included ACAS³², EFD³³, CIPD³⁴, ILM³⁵, CBI³⁶, Welsh Language Board, local equality councils, internal equality officers within authorities, commercial lawyers and equality organisations such as Disability Wales and Stonewall.

³² The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service

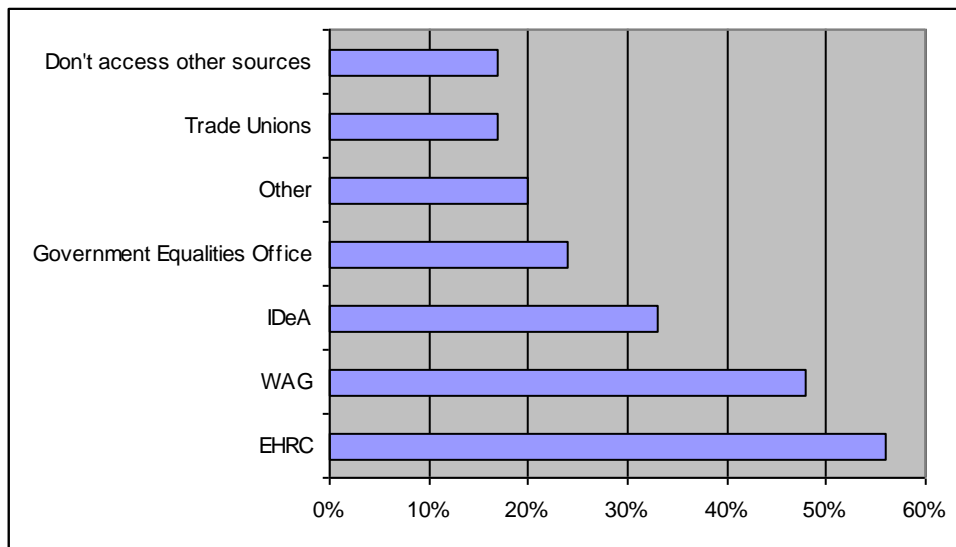
³³ Employers' Forum on Disability

³⁴ The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development

³⁵ The Institute of Leadership and Management

³⁶ Confederation of British Industry

Fig 5.9 Other sources of equalities support accessed by respondents



Base=52

The surveyed respondents were asked to compare the information or support that they had received from the Unit with what they were getting elsewhere. Just under half (42%) believed that the services of the Unit were unique and specific to local government: these respondents were more likely to be Equality Officers. A further half (50%) believed that the services provided by the Unit could also be accessed in part from other sources with non Equality Officers more likely to state this was the case, whilst the remaining 8% believed that all of the Unit's services were available elsewhere. The fact that such a low proportion of the surveyed respondents believed all of the Unit's services were available elsewhere suggests that the Unit fulfils an important role in terms of providing information and support. Furthermore the overwhelming majority (89%) believed that the quality of service obtained via the Unit compared favourably with what was available elsewhere and this proportion increased to 95% in terms of relevance of the service made available.

Overall face-to-face interviewees echoed these views. It was widely believed that the support made available via the Equalities Unit compared favourably with other sources of support and it was argued

that the Equalities Unit provided information which was specifically tailored to meet the needs of Welsh local government. Equalities Officers were very likely to make use of other alternative sources of support (compared to senior managers or elected members) and a few commented that they would be more likely to turn to specialist organisations or their own networks to obtain advice or information on specialist areas rather than the Equalities Unit. For example one long standing equality officer had developed strong links with a wide network of support organisations, particularly local organisations which had direct experience of the situation within that area or region. This particular officer noted that the Equalities Unit was failing to keep up with changing statistics about migration and developing changes around forced marriages³⁷, and so it was necessary for the authority to develop networks of support and information elsewhere.

It was generally felt that the Equalities Unit was fulfilling a current “void” that had come about as a result of the creation of the EHRC. Representatives from local government did not believe that the EHRC had to date made much effort to engage with local government and some drew attention to the fact that they had not even appointed a lead officer for local government within their Welsh office: “I don’t have one person I can contact – not even a name and a telephone number”. It was felt that the need for the Equalities Unit was even more evident given this situation.

5.3.10 Quality of Equalities Unit’s services

One of the key strengths of the Equalities Unit’s provision was deemed to be the calibre of the small team it deployed. Interviewees were particularly positive in their comments about the work of the team and drew attention to the level of “expertise” within the Unit. Several individuals also made reference to the fact that staff conducted their

³⁷ However it is accepted that the Equalities Unit’s remit does not, at present, include migration and forced marriages issues.

work in a very professional and capable manner, as the following quotes illustrate:

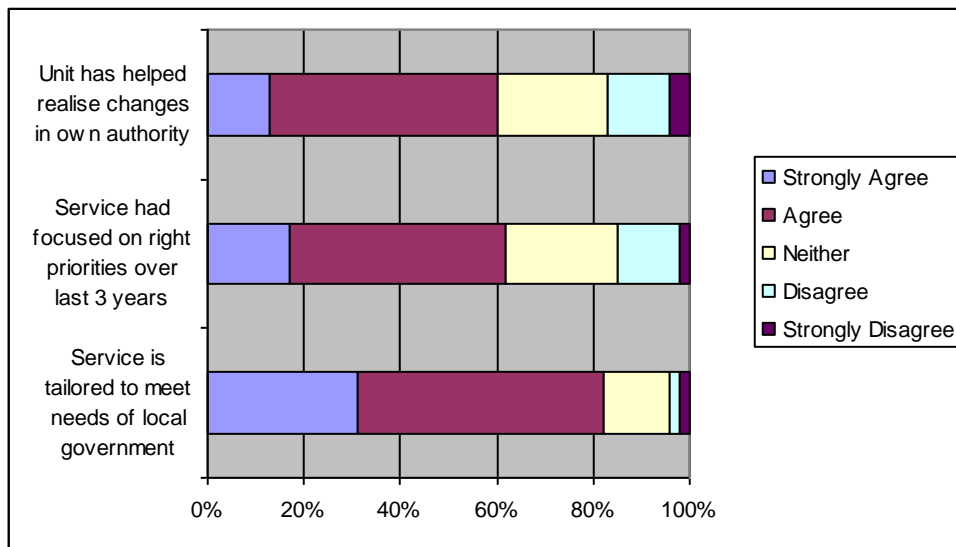
“I find the Unit invaluable. Their success is down to the individuals, they know what they’re doing”.

“I always trust that if I’m going to ring them or email them...they will take the time to get me a good response, they don’t palm me off.”

Equalities Officers in particular believed that the support made available via the Equalities Unit helped them deal with issues relating to “isolation” within the role, particularly in cases where there was a perceived lack of strategic guidance and support.

When asked to agree or disagree with certain statements about the work of the Unit the surveyed respondents were particularly likely to agree (at 82%) that that the service was tailored to meet the needs of local government (see Fig 5.10). Slightly lower proportions believed that the Unit had focused on the right priorities over the last three years (at 62%) and only 60% believed that the Unit had helped to realise some changes within their authority. Equality Officers were much more likely to agree with these three statements than the other respondents.

Fig 5.10 Respondents' Views on Equalities Unit Service



A fifth of those who responded to the question (10 respondents) believed that the service offered via the Equalities Unit was usually better than other services provided by the WLGA to their authority and just over a fifth (22% or 11 respondents) believed it to be usually the same. Equality Officers were more likely to state that the services offered were usually better. Only 6% thought that the service was usually poorer, with Elected Members being slightly more critical of the service than other respondents. The remaining respondents (51% or 25 respondents) could not comment on the services provided possibly due to their lack of dealings with other WLGA services.

5.3.11 Partnership Working

It was generally felt that the Equalities Unit had a constructive working relationship with its partner organisations, although it was acknowledged from several directions that engagement with the EHRC has not “been as strong as it could have been”. Whilst the EHRC and the Equalities Unit have met on several occasions for information sharing purposes and attend events held by the other, there does not appear to have been any joint partnership working to date between these two organisations. It was acknowledged by most stakeholders

interviewed that the relationship with the three previous Commissions³⁸ had been much stronger and more effective compared to that with the EHRC. There was a clear desire to strengthen the relationship between the Equalities Unit and the EHRC, particularly in terms of business planning processes and enabling the EHRC to get involved at the strategic level within local government. It was generally felt that things would improve as the EHRC bedded down in its role over time but that such a change would require a concerted effort on behalf of both organisations.

Some interviewees did provide examples of joint working with the Equalities Unit – the NHS Equalities Unit for example has been working in partnership with the Equalities Unit to develop a new e-learning tool around equalities and human rights. Similarly Public Sector Management Wales (PSMW) has been involved in the joint facilitation of action learning sets for public sector staff with the Equalities Unit.

Several non-local government stakeholders commented that the Equalities Unit fulfilled a particular useful role as a conduit to the 22 local authorities and could share intelligence on local government equality progress: “It is nice to have a port of call you can go to, you know that you can go to them and they’ll give you intelligence about what’s going on in local authorities, and what are the big issues around local government at the moment that we need to be talking about in health as well.” Furthermore some partners considered it particularly useful to be able to disseminate information to local authorities via the Unit’s regular bulletins.

³⁸ Commission for Racial Equality, Disability Rights Commission and Equal Opportunity Commission.

5.4 Future Role and Purpose of Equalities Unit

5.4.1 Future Need, Role and Purpose of Unit

There was widespread support for the continuation of the work of the Equalities Unit in moving forward amongst survey respondents and interviewees. This was evident amongst those surveyed with just under three quarters (71% or 37 respondents) calling for the Unit to continue with its work over the next three years. Only two respondents (4%) called for it to be disbanded. The remaining quarter did not express a view either way. Interviewees also stressed the need for external support in the future, although one called for such support to be much more focused than had been delivered in the past by the Equalities Unit.

The main reasons cited as to why the Equalities Unit continued to be needed were as follows:

- To provide strategic national consistency on matters relating to equalities within local government: “there will always be a need to have overarching bodies to supply information and advice to Local Authorities, to help promote a degree of consistency”;
- To ensure a specialist core of knowledge and information that can be accessed by local government: “This is a specialist area of legislation and public duty that is set to change considerably in the next three years notably in terms of the extension of equality duties to include more equality mandates, to foster good community relations, to tackle socio-economic inequality and new duties on age discrimination. The WLGA EU are well positioned to deliver information, advice and support to local authorities as we take this agenda forward”;
- To enable local government to respond to the evolving service delivery agenda and new rights of citizens challenges – in

particular new legislation (the “introduction of the new Bill”) and changes in society (“given the increase in BNP voting there is an even greater need for the Unit”);

- To support the often isolated role of Equality Officers by providing advice and support: “the support and help they give to us as equality officers is immeasurable” and “the equality officers network meetings are essential and we rely greatly on the information we received at these meetings and the opportunity to speak to other equality officers”;
- To continue fulfilling a function not currently being addressed by other organisations such as the EHRC: “in the absence of information coming from the EHRC the Unit is integral for the equalities agenda in Wales” and “the EHRC will not provide practical advice, help and guidance. Neither does the EHRC lobby on behalf of other authorities and represent the views of a number of organisations (as does the WLGA EU) in relation to Equalities issues”;
- To ensure that equalities receives continued priority within local government within the current financial cut back climate: “If the work of the Unit did not continue, I feel this would be to the detriment of equality in Welsh local government and would send out a negative signal to others about the emphasis being placed on equality at the present time”.

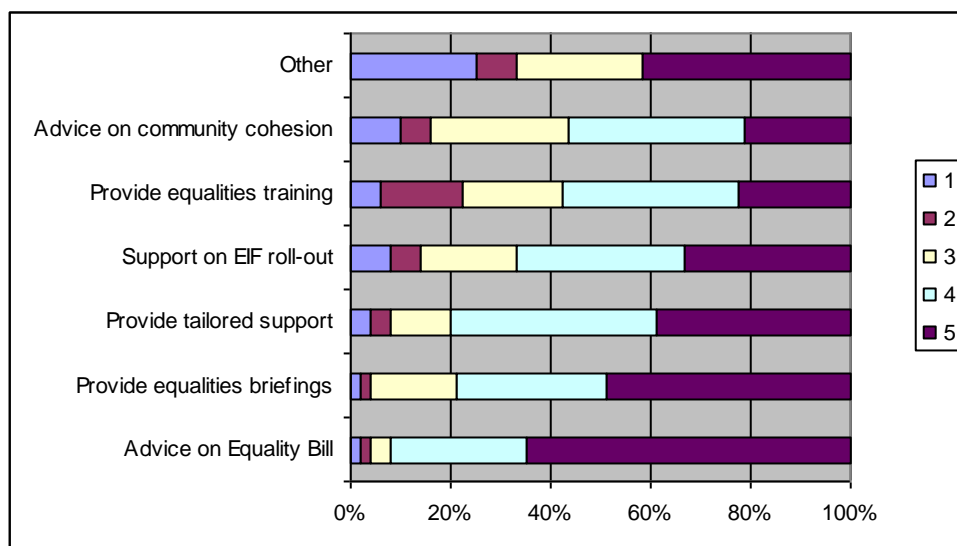
Two respondents stated their reasons for believing there was no need to continue with the work of the Equalities Unit. These were:

- “Most information and support is available elsewhere”;
- “It is by and large waste of time and Taxpayers money. It also fails to take into account the needs of English speakers”.

The surveyed respondents were asked to state the level of priority that should be given by the Unit to various activities over the coming three

years. By far the most important of these was advice on the Equality Bill (with 92% giving this element a score of 4 or 5 as shown in Fig 5.11), followed by providing equalities briefings and tailored support to local government. The provision of equalities training and advice on community cohesion issues were deemed to be less important. Several respondents cited other areas as a key priority and these included three respondents who noted the need to have a greater focus on Welsh language priorities: “there is a need for a dedicated person with responsibility for the Welsh language directly within the Unit” which would result in more frequent Rhwydiaith meetings and advice on implementing Welsh Language Schemes. Other areas of priorities identified included providing specific advice and information that would be of relevance to associate members such as the Fire and Rescue Services, consulting more widely with local authorities on their views on equality matters and continuing with the facilitation of equalities networks.

Fig 5.11 Key Future Priorities for Unit



1=not a priority and 5=a key priority

Many of these points were reinforced by those who were interviewed. It was generally felt that local government had a way to go in terms of equalities and that the inconsistency across the 22 local authorities

would not be addressed without intervention. Most authorities believed that external support was required and in the main did not feel that any other organisation could fulfil this role at present.

In moving forward most of those consulted believed that the Equalities Unit should continue along the track it has taken to date as its work was viewed as being reasonably effective. One stakeholder however did comment:

“They certainly have a reasonably good reputation and a good set of networks throughout Wales and I hear good reports. The question in my mind is still whether they’re doing the right thing or not, they can be doing things effectively but whether it’s something we want them to do over the next couple of years or not is the question.

There was a clear call for the Unit to focus its work upon the new legislative drivers and public sector duties that would arise. Local authority interviewees in particular called for the Unit to ensure that they would be kept fully briefed and trained around these developments.

A more mixed view was conveyed by interviewees around the future work of the Unit on the EIF. Some suggested that too much investment had been made by the Unit across this area of work and called for less focus upon it in the future. Others believed that having come this far, the Unit should focus upon addressing the difficulties associated with the EIF and ensuring that it is properly evaluated: “there’s no point in just bringing it out and leave people high and dry”. The same stakeholder commented that if the EIF was deemed to be of little use to local authorities then the Unit should consider revamping the tool.

Some interviewees suggested ‘new’ areas of work for the Equalities Unit to become involved with in the future and these included integrating equalities into procurement practice. For one authority this

area of work was considered a difficult issue and they wanted to find an approach which was “a mitigation of the clobbering” which procurement staff felt they were currently receiving. Other areas where additional work would be useful were relating equalities to performance improvement and also advice on how to work effectively in partnership with other bodies on equalities issues: “something that’s pragmatic and that would work”. Another authority interviewee suggested that it would be useful for the Unit to approach its current work in a different way – for example by facilitating debates on specific issues such as the Welsh language.

A common message conveyed by several stakeholders was the need for the Equalities Unit to concentrate its efforts at a more strategic level within local government and concentrate more of its resources at senior and Elected Member levels. Aligned with this was a feeling amongst some (particularly those who questioned how much focus there had been upon this to date) that the Unit should ensure that equalities becomes even more embedded across all the work of the WLGA. This would ensure that the Unit could have a greater impact upon local government equality policies and it was argued that “if policies were consistent it would lever people into doing things.”

It was also commonly felt that the Equalities Unit should help local authorities move away from a compliance approach to equalities (which was believed to have been the focus of activities over the last few years) to an outcome based approach and, in doing so, help local authorities understand their equalities objectives rather than equality schemes.

5.4.2 Future Funding Options

The majority of the Welsh Assembly Government stakeholders interviewed believed that the Assembly should continue to fund the work of the Equalities Unit, provided this evaluation justified the need

for its work, as they believed there was no evidence which suggested to them that the funding should be cut. However, two Assembly stakeholders questioned the value of continued funding and suggested that other options such as funding from local authority subscriptions should be explored as a way forward. It was argued that the Assembly often “seed core initiatives” but then expect the organisation to secure its own funding to continue the service.

There was a broadly similar division of opinion amongst those surveyed. When asked whether the Welsh Assembly Government should continue to fund the work of the Equalities Unit over the next few years the large majority (77% or 40 respondents) were of the view that this funding should continue, 6% (or 3 respondents) disagreed and the remaining 17% (9 respondents) were undecided.

Should the Equalities Unit be retained, the majority of stakeholders felt that it should continue to report to the Local Government Division as this would ensure that equalities would continue to be viewed as a mainstreamed rather than marginalised agenda within local government. However consultations with Welsh Assembly Government representatives revealed a general desire to secure greater formal input from the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Division to the work of the Unit. Furthermore there was also a desire to explore the scope for rationalisation of the current funding grants made available to the WLGA. It is understood that discussions about the provision of a single grant to the WLGA are already underway and that this grant would cover the work of the Equalities Unit.

Many local authority interviewees expressed their concerns about the possibility of discontinuing funding for the work of the Equalities Unit. Equality Officers in particular felt that this move would create a vacuum within local government support, particularly given the perceived regulatory rather than supportive approach adopted by the EHRC. One interviewee commented that should the unit disappear “we’d lose a

very important resource in terms of communication structures and discussion and consultations”. Several stakeholders also reinforced the point that discontinuation of funding for the Equalities Unit could send the wrong signals to local authorities: “it’s sending the wrong message, saying that equalities isn’t important”. It was feared that local authorities might replicate such a move and reduce the resources allocated to equalities work within their own organisations.

Though this was not raised explicitly within the topic guide, a number of interviewees also made clear their view that it was important that the work of the Equalities Unit should not be moved into the Welsh Assembly Government. This, it was argued, would remove the independent approach currently adopted by the Unit and could potentially jeopardise what is viewed as a “local government family” approach. It would also represent a shift away from the improvement agenda currently being led by the WLGA across several areas of local authority work.

Concerns were also expressed about the possibility of cutting the budget and restoring it to the local government settlement as this would “in the longer term probably be a false economy”. Some of those interviewed also highlighted the danger that equalities would not be given priority funding by local authorities within the current economic climate.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

We now, in conclusion, return to explore the overall review aims and objectives.

To what extent has the provision made available via the Equalities Unit sustained Welsh Assembly Government policy aims on equalities in local government?

Our policy review suggests that equality and social justice has become central to local government service improvements and that the WLGA, via its Equalities Unit, has had to respond to this evolving agenda. However although there appears to be a strong steer in Welsh Assembly Government over-arching local government policies on equalities issues it has become apparent that there is a lack of detail within improvement related policies and agreements on these issues which makes it difficult to conclude how effective the Unit has been in helping to realise WAG's policy aims in local government.

It would appear that the main driver for the work of Equalities Unit over the last few years has been non-devolved and legislative in nature. We believe that the Equalities Unit has naturally aligned its work programme to support local authorities meet their public sector duties and in doing so has concentrated on specific equality strands (gender, disability and race). There is no doubt that the equality agenda has evolved significantly since the Equalities Unit was originally established and in our view it has largely been able to keep abreast of these developments.

We believe that there are some issues within the Equalities Unit's business planning process and feedback from this review has drawn attention to the lack of strategic equality policy input from the Welsh Assembly Government into the business planning process being undertaken by the Equalities Unit. This has to some extent restricted

the Unit's ability to help achieve Welsh Assembly Government policy aims on equalities in local government. This was one area identified as an area for improvement in the original review which called for "developing a more integrated and harmonised approach to equalities policy development, advice and support for public sectors, within the Assembly itself". In our view this recommendation is still relevant to the work of the Unit.

The objectives set by the Equalities Unit within its business planning process do, in our view, fall under the WAG's grant offer terms. However we believe that many of the objectives set within annual business plans appear to be more 'process' related targets as opposed to SMART objectives. Similarly many of the quarterly actions proposed by the Unit were 'activity' based as opposed to 'outcome' based. It is difficult therefore to come to a firm conclusion about the extent to which the Equalities Unit was able to fulfil its objectives on an annual basis – it would be fair to say that the Unit has been effective in meeting its 'activity' and 'process' targets but it is much more difficult to substantiate the wider effects of its work programme.

How effective has the support given to local authorities been and how is it valued by local authorities?

The support and information made available by the Unit has been highly valued and regarded amongst most of those interviewed, particularly Equalities Officers, and it is clear that the Unit possesses a good understanding of local government and as a result is able to provide a tailored and supportive service. We believe that focus of Equalities Unit's work, which has mostly been around helping local government fulfil its legislative duties, has been well aligned to meet the priorities of local authorities. Having said this it would appear that the work of the Unit has been much more tailored to meet the needs of local authorities rather than associate members and the latter have been expected to take from this what is relevant for them. The calibre

and professionalism of team was a point reinforced by most consulted and this is considered a key strength of the Unit.

Overall the Equalities Unit has developed good working relationship with its key partners, although it lacks a formalised relationship and understanding with the EHRC. At the time of undertaking our fieldwork the support made available via the Equalities Unit compared favourably with other provision and appeared to fill a vacuum which seemed to be largely created by a lack of tailored support provision around equalities available elsewhere.

Our fieldwork found that local government representatives had overall good awareness of a range of resources produced by the Equalities Unit and in the main found these to be useful. Having said this there were some exceptions to this – for example there was fairly low awareness and use being made of the “What about Welsh” DVD resource and interviewees in particular did not rate the website as a particularly useful resource in comparison with other types of resources produced by the Unit. The feedback from this review suggests that the provision made available by the Equalities Unit has been delivered appropriately and examples provided indicate how the provision has had bearing upon the work of particular authorities. Particularly positive feedback was conveyed about the Unit’s briefings and bulletins as well as its training provision and several cases were identified where these resources had had an effect upon the work of individuals or departments. Furthermore positive feedback was given on the Unit’s networks, although several were critical of the lack of recent Rhwydiaith meetings³⁹.

The Equalities Improvement Framework (EIF) has been a key priority within the work of the Equalities Unit over the last couple of years yet

³⁹ We are aware that plans are underway to reinstate the Rhwydiaith network during early 2010.

the review encountered much negativity about this tool in terms of its appropriateness and practicality for local government.

We believe that the EIF has the potential to support local authorities to put the arrangements in place to mainstream equality throughout their organisations and to promote, manage and improve equality within local government and support local authorities in the delivery of their legal duties. In particular, it underlines the importance of strong, high level leadership in the management and improvement of equalities and the importance of equalities being viewed within the overall improvement management framework. The Framework itself, which benefits from having been developed in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, has most if not all of the components necessary to achieve its aims.

What is lacking is the detailed guidance and support that many local authorities continue to require in order to deliver their legal duties and achieve continual improvement. This should not be viewed as a criticism of the EIF, but rather as a reflection of the size of the task involved and the base skills and experience of those within local government who have been given the responsibility for implementing it. However, since the launch of the EIF a number of organisations in Wales, including the WLGA, have piloted and developed mechanisms which can assist local authorities in implementing the EIF with greater success, and there are opportunities for these to be mainstreamed within the Equality Improvement Framework.

While there is much evidence of the value attached to the Equalities Unit particularly by those most directly benefiting from its support, the question of its effectiveness is more difficult to answer definitively. The fact is that despite the Unit's efforts, there clearly remains a high degree of inconsistency between the way in which local authorities approach equalities issues and this might be thought either to support the arguments for continued efforts by the Unit or to suggest that it has

not performed particularly well in “levelling up”. From our perspective, we believe it is important to recognise that operating largely at a working level (relating above all to Equalities Officers themselves), the scope for the Unit to change behaviours across local authorities is inevitably going to be limited. In our view, this is an argument for ensuring that efforts are made by the Unit - and the WLGA collectively – to raise the profile of equalities issues at more senior levels within local authorities: arguably the new Equalities duties will give a springboard for this, if the political will is there, although it needs also to be recognised that gaining attention for equalities issues is likely to become more, not less, difficult in a climate of large budget cuts.

Do local authorities desire any changes in the role and purpose of the Equalities Unit?

Overall local authorities presented a strong argument for retaining the role of the Equalities Unit and reinforced the need for this sort of external support in moving forward. As would have been expected these views were much stronger from those organisations who were more involved with the Unit than others. It was generally felt that the Unit should continue with its current role and concentrate on new legislative developments and equality drivers. However some called for the Unit to explore ‘new’ areas of work as well as give a greater focus upon Welsh language issues. Others (particularly associate members) would like to see the services made available by the Unit become much more relevant to them.

Whilst it was acknowledged that some steps had been taken to work at a more strategic level there was a general call for the Equalities Unit to become much more involved with local authorities at this level in the future. In particular the need to concentrate efforts upon Elected Members in moving forward was considered a key priority for the Unit.

Furthermore local authorities called upon the Unit to enhance the Equalities Improvement Framework and its guidance. Our review of the EIF concurs with this view and we believe that there is scope to improve the guidance and support made available to local authorities in this area.

Is continued financial support by the Welsh Assembly Government justified; and if so which is the most appropriate policy area within the Welsh Assembly Government to fund and effectively monitor the unit?

We believe that there is strong justification for the Welsh Assembly Government to continue to provide financial support for supporting local government on equalities issues. We base this argument on some key considerations. Firstly there are still huge inconsistencies in the way in which local government currently approach equalities issues and the authorities which are currently lagging behind require support to move forward. Secondly local government will have to embrace some major equality legislation changes over the coming few years and will no doubt look for external sources of guidance and advice to take these new equality duties on board. Thirdly, equalities issues are currently in danger of being side-lined within some local authorities (given reduction in equality resources and public sector funding pressures) - the risks associated with cutting the Equalities Unit funding could jeopardise the progress made within local government and could potentially send the wrong signals to local authorities.

The evidence collected during our fieldwork generally point to the Equalities Unit being the most appropriate entity to provide this advisory and supporting function. We agree with this feedback – the Equalities Unit has been in a position to provide tailored support to local government in Wales (possibly with the exception of associate members) and is highly regarded by the majority of local government organisations as a trusting and professional service. One of its key

strengths is its independence - from both its funder, the Welsh Assembly Government, and from the statutory functions of the EHRC.

We conclude that Welsh Assembly Government funding should be maintained within the Local Government Policy Division as this will ensure equalities issues are maintained as mainstream issues. It will also enable further discussion within the Welsh Assembly Government around the possibility of rationalising WLGA grant funding into one fund – we stress however that in doing so that the allocated funding for the work of the Equalities Unit may need to be safeguarded.

However, we are mindful that the work of the Equalities Unit has lacked input from Welsh Assembly Government strategic equality policy thinking in the past and that this has hindered the Unit's ability to identify and meet Welsh Assembly Government equality objectives for local government. As a result we recommend in Chapter 7 that a strategic and formal input by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division be secured within the Equality Unit's Steering Group to ensure that the business planning work of the Equalities Unit better meets these objectives.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

We recommend that funding for the work of the Equalities Unit is continued for at least another three years and if appropriate that this funding be ring fenced within any single fund made available to the WLGA.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Equalities Unit funding be maintained within the Local Government Policy Division but that a Steering Group be established with strategic level input from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division to help direct and monitor the work of the Equalities Unit.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the business planning processes of the Equalities Unit be reviewed and improved. We believe that future work objectives would benefit from being SMARter and more outcomes oriented (as opposed to process oriented) and similarly that action planning targets should become more outcome based than activity based.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Equalities Unit places a greater focus upon strategic level intervention (targeted at Elected Members and Senior Management within Local Government) in the future and possibly reconsiders its approach to targeting Elected Members in a more effective way than is currently being adopted via the Elected Member Network. Aligned to this we recommend that the Equalities Unit also places a greater focus in targeting and working with those 'non-converted' authorities as we believe that such a shift in focus would have a greater impact upon those authorities who are currently lagging behind. We accept however that the success of such intervention will

rely upon the willingness of these authorities to work in partnership with the Equalities Unit.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Equalities Unit considers a comprehensive revision of the Equalities Improvement Framework and its related guidance after the new Equalities Duties are adopted. We also recommend that the Equalities Duties are factored fully into the next revision of the Wales Programme of Improvement/Local Government Measure.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Equalities Unit revisits and updates the terms of reference for its Networks, and reconvenes Rhwydiaith at the earliest opportunity.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that in moving forward the Equalities Unit seeks to reflect the approach of Single Equality Schemes in terms of adopting a less strand specific approach and placing a greater focus on equality and human rights outcomes.

ANNEX 1 CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN

Organisation	Contact Person
WLGA	Steve Thomas
WLGA	Naomi Alleyne
WLGA	Anna Morgan
WLGA	Rob Beardall
WAG	Frank Cuthbert
WAG	Heulwen Blackmore
WAG	Delyth Davies
WAG	Steve Pomeroy
WAG	June Milligan
WAG	Reg Kilpatrick
WAG	Richard Shearer
WLB	Dyfan Sion
EHRC Wales	Amelia John and Sue Dyer
NHS Centre for Equality and HR	Paula Walters
Public Sector Management Wales	Voirrey Manson
Local Authorities/Associate Members	
South Wales Police	Hannah Jenkins, Equalities and Human Rights Manager
Blaenau Gwent	Alun Berkitt, Equalities and Welsh Language Officer
Caerphilly County Council	David Thomas, Equality and Welsh Language Policy Officer Cllr Lindsay Whittle Cllr. Colin Mann
Carmarthenshire County Council	Eleanor Davies, Equality and Language Officer
Gwynedd County Council	Ruth Richards, Equality and Language Officer
Flintshire	Cllr Neville Phillips, Equalities Champion Fiona Mocko, Policy Officer, Equalities Karen Armstrong, Manager Policy, Performance & Partnerships Caren Prys Jones, Welsh Language Officer
Newport	Cllr Peter Davies, Cabinet Member for Resources Sarah Hopkins, Head of Policy Llio Elgar, Policy and Diversity Officer
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Dilys Jouvenat, Team Manager Equalities

ANNEX 2 WEB BASED QUESTIONNAIRE

Old Bell 3 has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government to carry out a review of the Welsh Local Government Association's (WLGA) Equalities Unit. As part of the review we are keen to obtain feedback from individuals who have had some involvement with the Equalities Unit. It is important that we collect views from across a range of departments (and not only the Equalities Department) within your authority in order to help inform the future work of the Equalities Unit.

We therefore kindly ask that you complete a short survey which should not take more than 15 minutes of your time - you will only be expected to answer questions about the Unit's activities with which you are familiar.

Your views will be kept completely confidential and will not be attributed to you or your authority.

First we would like to ask some general information about your authority.

1. Which of the following authorities do you represent?

- Local Authority
- Fire and Rescue Services
- Police Authority
- National Park
- Other

If other please specify type of authority

2. What is your role within your authority?

- Chief Executive/Executive Manager
- Service Head/Manager
- Elected Member
- Equality Officer
- Other

If Other please specify

3. On average how often do you have personal contact with the Equalities Unit? (personal contact could be defined as attending meetings/events or receiving telephone based advice for example)

- Up to once a month
- Up to once a quarter
- Up to once a year
- Never

4. On a scale of 1 to 5 [where 1 is very little and 5 is very much] how much importance would you say is attached to equalities issues:

	Very Little 1	2	3	4	Very Much 5
Within your own authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Within your Department/Unit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Within Welsh local government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Within the WLGA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. On a scale of 1 to 5 [where 1 is very little and 5 is very much] how much importance would you say has been given to each of the following equality strands within your own authority over the last year?

	Very Little 1	2	3	4	Very Much 5
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. On a scale of 1 to 5 [where 1 is very little and 5 is very much] how much importance would you say has been given to each of the following equality strands within the work of the Equalities Unit over the last year?

	Very Little 1	2	3	4	Very Much 5
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welsh Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This section deals with the Equalities Unit's information and briefing resources

7. Have you accessed the WLGA Equalities Unit website?

- Yes
 No

8. [If Q7=Yes] Why did you access the WLGA Equalities Unit website? [Select all that apply]

- To obtain contact details for the Unit
 - To find out more about the work of the Unit
 - To access a resource published on the website
 - To obtain information on equality legislation
 - To obtain information on training provision
 - To obtain information on one of its Networks (e.g. agenda; minutes of meetings)
 - Other
- If other please specify

9. [If Q7=Yes] How would you rate the WLGA Equalities Unit website in terms of its quality?

- Very Good
- Good
- Poor
- Very Poor

10. [If Q7=Yes] How useful is the WLGA Equalities Unit website content?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not particularly useful
- Not at all useful

11. [If Q7=Yes] How, if at all, were you able to use the information obtained via the website in your place of work?

12. [If Q7=Yes] How, if at all, do you think the WLGA Equalities Unit website could be improved?

13. Have you seen any of the following resources produced by the Equalities Unit?

	Yes	No
Equalities Briefings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E-bulletins	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
"What about Welsh" Trainers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resource Pack DVD		

14. [If Q13a=Yes] How would you rate the Equalities Briefings in terms of their quality?

- Very Good
- Good
- Poor
- Very Poor

- 15. [If Q13a=Yes] How useful are the Equalities Briefings?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful
 - Not at all useful
- 16. [If Q13a=Yes] How, if at all, does the information made available in the Equalities Briefings help you in your workplace?**
- 17. [If Q13a=Yes] How, if at all, do you think the Equalities Briefings could be improved?**
- 18. [If Q13b=Yes] How would you rate the E-bulletins in terms of their quality?**
- Very Good
 - Good
 - Poor
 - Very Poor
- 19. [If Q13b=Yes] How useful are the E-bulletins?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful
 - Not at all useful
- 20. [If Q13b=Yes] How, if at all, does the information made available in the E-bulletins help you in your workplace?**
- 21. [If Q13b=Yes] How, if at all, do you think the E-bulletins could be improved?**
- 22. [If Q13c=Yes] How would you rate the "What about Welsh" Trainers Resource Pack DVD in terms of its quality?**
- Very Good
 - Good
 - Poor
 - Very Poor
- 23. [If Q13c=Yes] How useful was the "What about Welsh" Trainers Resource Pack DVD?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful
 - Not at all useful

24. [If Q13c=Yes] How, if at all, did the "What about Welsh" Trainers Resource Pack DVD assist you in your place of work?

25. [If Q13c=Yes] How, if at all, do you think the "What about Welsh" Trainers Resource Pack DVD could have been improved?

This section deals with the Equalities Unit Networks.

26. Have you attended any of the following Networks facilitated by the Equalities Unit?

[Select those that apply]

- Equalities Network
- Elected Members Equality Champions networks
- Rhwydiaith Network
- Equality Trainers Network [that used to meet in the past]
- No, not attended any of these

27. [If Q26= Equalities Network] How useful do you find the following aspects of the Equalities Network?

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Not at all useful
Equalities Unit Briefings/Updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking with other Equalities Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussing best practice examples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28. [If Q26= Equalities Network] How, if at all, does your attendance at the Equalities Network assist you with your work?

29. [If Q26= Equalities Network] How, if at all, do you think the Equalities Network could be improved?

30. [If Q26= Elected Members Network] How useful do you find the following aspects of the Elected Members Equality Champions Network?

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Not at all useful
Equalities Unit Briefings/Updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking with other Elected Members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Discussing best practice examples

31. [If Q26= Elected Members Network] How, if at all, does your attendance at the Elected Members Equality Champions network assist you with your work?

32. [If Q26= Elected Members Network] How, if at all, do you think the Elected Members Equality Champions network could be improved?

33. [If Q26 = Rhwydiaith Network] How useful do you find the following aspects of the Rhwydiaith Network?

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Not at all useful
Equalities Unit Briefings/Updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking with other members	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussing best practice examples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

34. [If Q26 = Rhwydiaith Network] How, if at all, does your attendance at the Rhwydiaith network assist you with your work?

35. [If Q26 = Rhwydiaith Network] How, if at all, do you think the Rhwydiaith network could be improved?

36. [If Q26 = Equalities Trainers Network] How useful were the following aspects of the Equalities Trainers Network?

	Very useful	Useful	Not useful	Not at all useful
Equalities Unit Briefings/Updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Networking other Equalities Trainers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discussing best practice examples	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

37. [If Q26 = Equalities Trainers Network] At the time how, if at all, did your attendance at the Equalities Trainers Network assists you with your work?

- 38. [If Q26 = Equalities Trainers Network] At the time how, if at all, do you think the Equality Trainers Network could have been improved?**

This next section covers the Equality Improvement Framework developed by the Equalities Unit.

- 39. Are you familiar with the Equality Improvement Framework for Wales for Welsh Local Government produced by the Equalities Unit?**
- Yes
 - No
- 40. [If Q39=Yes] What are your views on the quality of the Equality Improvement Framework for Wales resources (including the Guidance Notes) produced by the Equalities Unit?**
- Very Good
 - Good
 - Poor
 - Very Poor
- 41. [If Q39=Yes] How useful are the Equality Improvement Framework resources to you at your place of work?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful
 - Not at all useful
- 42. [If Q39=Yes] How, if at all, does the information made available in the Equality Improvement Framework help you in your workplace?**
- 43. [If Q39=Yes] How, if at all, do you think the Equality Improvement Framework could be improved?**
- 44. [If Q39=Yes] Have you attended an Equality Improvement Framework Workshop or Training event delivered by the Equalities Unit?**
- Yes
 - No
- 45. [If Q44=Yes] How would you rate the Equality Improvement Framework Workshop/Training provision in terms of its quality?**
- Very Good
 - Good
 - Poor
 - Very Poor

- 46. [If Q44=Yes] How useful was the Equality Improvement Framework Workshop/Training provision?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful
 - Not at all useful
- 47. [If Q44=Yes] How, if at all, did the Equality Improvement Framework Workshop/Training provision you attended affect your work or authority?**
- 48. [If Q44=Yes] How, if at all, do you think the Equality Improvement Framework Workshop/Training provision could have been improved?**
- 49. [If Q39=Yes] To what extent has your authority implemented the Equality Improvement Framework for Wales?**
- Fully implemented the EIF
 - Partially implemented the EIF
 - Commitment secured to implement the EIF
 - EIF under discussion
 - No steps taken as yet
 - No intention of implementing the EIF
 - Other
- If other please give details
- 50. [If Q39=Yes] Have you received advice or support from the Equalities Unit on the implementation of the Equality Improvement Framework?**
- Yes
 - No
- 51. [If Q50=Yes] What advice or support did you receive from the Equalities Unit on the EIF?**
- 52. [If Q50=Yes] What are your views on the advice or support received on the EIF to date?**
- 53. [If Q39=Yes] What benefits have you gained or expect to gain from the implementation of the Equality Improvement Framework? [Select all that apply]**
- Enable your authority to meet its legal duties
 - Build upon the benefits of the Equality Standard for Local Government
 - Building staff moral and motivation
 - Generating a culture of excellence
 - Better customer focus
 - Improved quality service provision

- Increased flexible workforce
- A more creative and innovative workforce
- Other

If other please specify

Next we would like to cover the Equalities Unit training provision

- 54. Have you attended any of the following training events organised by the Equalities Unit? [Select all that apply]**
- Valuing Difference, Creating Success (Senior Management Training)
 - Training Equality Trainers
 - Making a Difference (Police Authority Training)
- 55. How would you rate the "Valuing Difference, Creating Success" training you attended in terms of its quality?**
- Very Good
 - Good
 - Poor
 - Very Poor
- 56. How useful was the "Valuing Difference, Creating Success" training provision?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful
 - Not at all useful
- 57. How, if at all, did the "Valuing Difference, Creating Success" training you attended affect your work or authority? Please provide any examples of how the training may have led to other activities such as speaking at conferences or running workshops.**
- 58. How, if at all, do you think the "Valuing Difference, Creating Success" training provision could have been improved?**
- 59. How would you rate the "Training Equality Trainers" event you attended in terms of its quality?**
- Very Good
 - Good
 - Poor
 - Very Poor
- 60. How useful was the "Training Equality Trainers" provision?**
- Very useful
 - Useful
 - Not particularly useful

Not at all useful

61. How, if at all, did the "Training Equality Trainers" event you attended affect your work or authority? Please provide any examples of how the training may have led to other activities such as speaking at conferences or running workshops.

62. How, if at all, did you think the "Training Equality Trainers" provision could have been improved?

63. How would you rate the "Making a Difference" training you attended in terms of its quality?

- Very Good
- Good
- Poor
- Very Poor

64. How useful was the "Making a Difference" training provision?

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not particularly useful
- Not at all useful

65. How, if at all, did the "Making a Difference" training you attended affect your work or authority? Please provide any examples of how the training may have led to other activities such as speaking at conferences or running workshops.

66. How, if at all, do you think the "Making a Difference" training provision could have been improved?

This section covers any other support you may have received
from the Equalities Unit.

67. Has your authority received any other kind of support from the Equalities Unit that has not been already covered by this questionnaire?

- Yes
- No

68. [If Q67=Yes] What was the nature of this support?

69. [If Q67=Yes] What difference did the support of the Equalities Unit make to you and your authority?

This last section covers other sources of support on equalities available to you and what the role of the Equalities Unit should be in the future.

70. Do you access information or support on equalities issues from any of the following organisations? [Select all that apply]

- EHRC
- IDeA
- Welsh Assembly Government
- Government Equalities Office
- Trade Unions
- Other
- No, I don't access information or support on equalities from any other organisation

If Other where do you access information?

71. [If Q70=Not No] Is the information or support that you get from the Equalities Unit different to the information or support you get from other organisations?

- Yes, the services of the EU are unique and specific to local government
- In part, but some of the services provided by the EU can also be accessed from other sources
- No, all of the EU services are available elsewhere

72. [If Q70=Not No] How does the service of the Equalities Unit compare with what is available from other equality sources in terms of:

	EU compares favourably	EU does not compare favourably
Quality of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relevance of service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

73. To what extent would you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The Equalities Unit service is tailored to meet the equalities needs of Welsh local government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Equalities Unit has focused on the right priorities over the last three years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The Equalities Unit has helped to realise some changes within your authority

75. How does the service provided by the Equalities Unit compare with the service generally provided by the WLGA to your authority?

- Service of Equalities Unit is usually better
- Service of Equalities Unit is usually the same
- Service of Equalities Unit is usually poorer
- Don't know

74. Is there a need for the Equalities Unit to continue with its work over the next three years?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

[If Q74 = Yes] Why do you think there is a need for the Equalities Unit?

[If Q74 = No] Why do you think there is no need for the Equalities Unit?

75. On a scale of 1 to 5 [where 1 is not a priority and 5 is a key priority] to what extent should the Equalities Unit be prioritising the following areas of work over the next three years?

	Not a Priority 1	2	3	4	Key Priority 5
Advising authorities on the implications of the Equality Bill	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Advising authorities on community cohesion issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting the roll-out of the Equalities Improvement Framework	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing equalities training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing equalities related briefings and updates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing tailored support to authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If other please specify					

76. Do you think that the Welsh Assembly Government should continue to fund the work of the Equalities Unit over the next few years?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

ANNEX 3: TOPIC GUIDES

Stakeholder Interview Topic Guide

PREAMBLE

- Thank you for agreeing to talk to me.
- OB3 has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (the Social Justice and Local Government Department) to undertake a review of the WLGA's Equalities Unit. It has been in existence since 2002 and this review focuses on its work since 2005.
- Broadly speaking, the areas I'd like to cover are:
 - The need, rationale and objectives for the Unit;
 - Your views on its activities and the support given to local authorities and associate members;
 - The effectiveness of its work and the impact it has had upon equalities in local government;
 - Your views on the Unit's future direction and role.
- We appreciate that you may not be familiar with all aspects of the Unit's work and will only expect you to comment on areas familiar to you.
- We will be preparing a report during December and your views will be important in feeding into it, although what you say will be kept anonymous and not attributed to you.
- I'd expect our discussion to take about one hour.
- Please feel free to ask me any questions before we start.

The contact person at Old Bell 3 is Nia Bryer 01558 668649
The Welsh Assembly Government client contacts are Robert Willis, Research Manager 01685 729138 and Delyth Davies, 02920 823660.

Note: Please only ask those questions where respondent will be familiar/in a position to respond.

BACKGROUND

Interviewee Name	
Interviewee Role	
Name of Organisation	
Date of Interview	
Interviewer	

SECTION 1: ROLE/RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EQUALITIES UNIT

	What was/is your role in relation to the Equalities Unit? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probe for time period of involvement

SECTION 2: RATIONALE AND NEED FOR THE EQUALITIES UNIT

	How was the need for the Equalities Unit initially identified? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probe for views on what the key policy drivers were?○ Probe for views on how need and rationale for the Unit has changed over time.

	In what way does the Equalities Unit support and help deliver key WAG (e.g. Wales Programme for Improvement, Single Equality Scheme, Making the Connections etc) or other policies/strategies in relation to equalities within local government? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probe for which ones and in what way the Unit helps to deliver them?

	How much importance is attached to equalities issues in general by the WLGA? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why do you say that?○ Which of the equality strands (Probe for race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and Welsh language) has the WLGA in general focused on since 2005?○ Have equalities priorities changed over time? Why?

	<p>How much importance is attached to equalities issues in general across Welsh local authorities and other associate members?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How consistent is the engagement with equalities issues of different local authorities compared with one another and what accounts for any inconsistencies (e.g. location, demographics, political control, size, budgets etc)? ○ How consistent is the engagement of local authorities with different equalities strands (Probe for race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and Welsh language) and what accounts for any inconsistencies? ○ How (if at all) has the engagement of local authorities with equalities issues changed since 2005 and why? ○ To what extent is engagement driven by legislative change?

	<p>Do you think local authorities still need a source of external support to help them address equalities issues effectively?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do you say this? ○ Is this need any different from/greater than the need for support on other aspects of their work?

SECTION 3: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EQUALITIES UNIT

	<p>To what extent have the overarching aims and objectives of the Equalities Unit since 2005 been appropriate?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To what extent have these aims and objectives changed over time? ○ To what extent do you believe that the EU's current priorities are appropriate?

	<p>[If interviewee has knowledge of 2005 Review] To what extent have the recommendations of the 2005 Review been implemented? [see report for details]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What difference have these made to the work of the Unit? ○ (If appropriate) Why have any recommendations not been implemented?

SECTION 4: EQUALITIES UNIT PROVISION

	<p>What aspects of the Equalities Unit's provision are you familiar with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What information or training have you received (or accessed)?

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the advice and support made available by the Unit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for tailored support made available to LAs and other organisations on aspects such as mainstreaming equality, community cohesion, meeting equalities duties, developing equalities schemes etc.

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the Equality Improvement Framework for Wales for Welsh Local Government?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for views on resources developed ○ Probe for views on training provided and workshops attended ○ Probe for views on EIF pilot projects implemented ○ Probe for views on the extent to which local authorities are implemented or will be implementing the EIF

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the Networks facilitated by the Unit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for Equalities Network; Elected Members Equality Champions, Rhwydiaith and Equality Trainers Network

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the training provision made available by the Unit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for training such as Training Equalities Trainers, Valuing Diversity – Creating Success etc

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the Equalities Unit's website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How, if at all, could the website be improved?

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of information resources made available to local authorities/associate members?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for views on resources such as e-newsletters, Equalities Briefings, DVDs and any other resources respondent will be familiar with.

	<p>Overall do you think that the activities being delivered by the Equalities Unit are the right ones?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prompt for views on most and least relevant activities for local authorities and associate members ○ Prompt for views on other activities which the EU should be delivering

SECTION 5: ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

	To what extent has the Equalities Unit been meeting the aims and objectives set in each of its Annual Business Plans? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What factors have affected these achievements?

	Are you able to identify any examples of the way in which the EU's activities have influenced/changed policy and practice within local authorities/associate member organisations? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If yes, please provide details○ If not, why not?

	Overall how effective has the work of the Equalities Unit been since 2005? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Based on their knowledge of and contact with the EU how valuable has the work of the Equalities Unit been?○ What has worked particularly well?○ What has not worked as well?

	How does the work of the EU compare with other sources of support available to local authorities on equalities issues in terms of quality, usefulness and value? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Prompt with EHRC, IDeA etc

SECTION 6: FUTURE ROLE AND PROVISION

	<p>Do you think that there is still a need for the work of the Equalities Unit to stimulate engagement with equalities issues on the part of local authorities and associate members?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why do you say this?○

	<p>Is the Equalities Unit still necessary in light of other sources of information available to authorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If yes, how does it need to adjust to the changing needs for information and support on equalities?

	<p>Do you think that there is any difference between the role of the Equalities Unit in providing support, guidance and information on good practice from the role of other parts of the WLGA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If so, what is it?○ If not, is there nevertheless a reason for external (WAG) funding for the Equalities Unit even though most other WLGA activities are funded from subscriptions?

	<p>What do you think the priorities of the Equalities Unit should be over the next three years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why do you say this?

	How could the Equalities Unit work more effectively in moving forward?

	Where should the Equalities Unit be located (i.e. within WLGA or other)?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Why do you say this?

	[If not covered above] What are the implications of the Equalities Bill upon the future role and work of the Equalities Unit?

	[Only ask WAG interviewees] Should the WAG continue to fund the Equalities Unit?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If yes should funding continue at the same level?○ If yes should funding continue to be made available from the Local Government Division or from an another division such as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Division (formerly EHRD)○ If no what would be the most appropriate source for funding EU (if needed) in the future?

	What would happen if the WAG ceased funding the EU?

CLOSE

Thank respondent for feedback.

Local Authority / Associate Member Interview Topic Guide

PREAMBLE

- ❑ Thank you for agreeing to talk to me.
- ❑ OB3 has been commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government (the Social Justice and Local Government Department) to undertake a review of the WLGA's Equalities Unit. It has been in existence since 2002 and this review focuses on its work since 2005.
- ❑ Broadly speaking, the areas I'd like to cover are:
 - The need, rationale and objectives for the Unit;
 - Your views on its activities and the support given to your authority in particular and to other local authorities and associate members in general;
 - The effectiveness of its work and the impact it has had upon equalities in your authority in particular and in Welsh local government in general;
 - Your views on the Unit's future direction and role.
- ❑ We appreciate that you may not be familiar with all aspects of the Unit's work and will only expect you to comment on areas familiar to you.
- ❑ We will be preparing a report during December and your views will be important in feeding into it, although what you say will be kept anonymous and not attributed to you.
- ❑ I'd expect our discussion to take about one hour.
- ❑ Please feel free to ask me any questions before we start.

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Note: Please only ask those questions where respondent will be familiar/in a position to respond.

BACKGROUND

Interviewee Name	
Interviewee Role	
Name of Organisation	
Date of Interview	
Interviewer	

SECTION 1: ROLE AND BACKGROUND

	What is your current role within the authority and what, in general terms are your current priorities? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ [If equalities not raised] How do equalities issues relate to those priorities?

	How much importance is attached to equalities issues in general within and across your organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How consistent is engagement with equalities issues across the organisation?○ How (if at all) has your organisation's engagement with equalities issues changed since 2005 and why?○ To what extent has your engagement been driven by legislative change?

	Which equality strands have been given the greatest focus within your organisation over the last few years? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probe for race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and Welsh language○ Why has this been the case?

	What involvement have you had with the Equalities Unit over recent years? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probe for time period of involvement

SECTION 2: RATIONALE AND NEED FOR THE EQUALITIES UNIT

	Do you think in general terms that your authority needed in the past access to a source of external support and advice on equalities issues? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Is this still the case? Why?

	To what extent have the Equalities Unit's priorities since 2005 been appropriate? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Have EU's priorities been well-aligned with your organisational equalities priorities?

SECTION 3: EQUALITIES UNIT PROVISION

NOTE: ask only about areas of provision where the interviewee has had direct experience.

	What aspects of the Equalities Unit's provision are you familiar with? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What information or training have you received (or accessed)?○ How was this information or training used within your authority?○ What effect did it have upon your work and authority?

	What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the advice and support made available by the Unit? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Probe for tailored support made available on aspects such as mainstreaming equality, community cohesion, meeting equalities duties, developing equalities schemes etc.○ Probe for impact (if any) of advice and support

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the Equality Improvement Framework for Wales for Welsh Local Government?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for views on resources developed ○ Probe for views on training provided and workshops attended ○ Probe for views on the extent to which the interviewees authority is or will be implementing the EIF ○ Probe for impact of EIF (if any) within the authority

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the Networks facilitated by the Unit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for Equalities Network; Elected Members Equality Champions, Rhwydiaith and Equality Trainers Network ○ Probe for impact of Networks (if any) upon the authority

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the training provision made available by the Unit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for training such as Training Equalities Trainers, Valuing Diversity – Creating Success etc ○ Probe for impact of training (if any) upon the authority's working practices

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of the Equalities Unit's website?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How often (if at all) do you refer to the website ○ How, if at all, could the website be improved?

	<p>What are your views on the quality, usefulness and value of information resources made available to local authorities/associate members?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Probe for views on resources such as e-newsletters, Equalities Briefings, DVDs and any other resources respondent will be familiar with.

	<p>Overall do you think that the activities being delivered by the Equalities Unit are the right ones?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prompt for views on most and least relevant activities for the interviewee's authority and for local authorities and associate members in general ○ Prompt for views on other activities which the EU should be delivering

SECTION 4: ACHIEVEMENTS AND OUTCOMES

	<p>Are you able to identify any examples of the way in which the EU's activities have influenced/changed policy and practice within your authority?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If yes, please provide details ○ If not, why do you think this is the case? (probe for issues within and outside the control of the EU)

	<p>From your dealings with the Equalities Unit how effective do you think it has been since 2005?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What has worked particularly well? ○ What has not worked as well?

	<p>What other sources of support (if any) do you access on equalities issues?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prompt with EHRC, IDeA etc ○ How does the work of the EU compare with these sources in terms of quality, usefulness and value? ○ To what extent are the services made available via the EU different and unique to these other organisations?

SECTION 5: FUTURE ROLE AND PROVISION

	<p>Do you think that there is still a need for the work of the Equalities Unit to stimulate engagement with equalities issues on the part of local authorities and associate members?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do you say this?

	<p>Do you think that there is any difference between the role of the Equalities Unit in providing support, guidance and information on good practice from the role of other parts of the WLGA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If so, what is it? ○ If not, is there nevertheless a reason for external (WAG) funding for the Equalities Unit even though most other WLGA activities are funded from subscriptions?

	<p>What do you think the priorities of the Equalities Unit should be over the next three years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Why do you say this?

	<p>[If not covered above] What are the implications of the Equalities Bill upon the future role and work of the Equalities Unit?</p>

	What would happen if the WAG ceased funding the EU? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Would you be able to source support from alternative means?

CLOSE

Thank respondent for feedback.